

SUICIDE AND CHURCH CANON LAW

A Thesis

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the Faculty of the
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**In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Theology**

by

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This dissertation, written by

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Alexander Homer Demopulos was born on September 6, 1925, in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Hazleton High School in 1943 and continued his scholastic pursuits at "Holy Cross," Greek Orthodox Theological School in Brookline, Massachusetts. In June, 1949, he graduated from "Holy Cross" Seminary and immediately enrolled in the summer clinical training program of Andover-Newton School of Theology in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. After studying in this school for one year he became a supervisor and lecturer in the clinical training program. In the Spring of 1950 he was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Divinity and in 1951 received a Masters Degree in Sacred Theology, majoring in Pastoral Care and Pastoral Psychology. He then became a Th.D. candidate at the Boston University School of Theology taking an internship as chaplain at the Mattapan State Mental Hospital. He was ordained Deacon in October, 1952, and continued in the Doctoral program until Christmas of 1952, at which time he was assigned to Saint Sophia Cathedral in Los Angeles. In March of 1953 he was received into the Eastern Orthodox Church as a priest, after having been duly ordained.

During his twelve year assignment to Saint Sophia Cathedral he served as youth director; director of the

Orthodox Summer Camp project; Chaplain to the Orthodox Students on campus of the University of Southern California and the University of California, Los Angeles; President of the Council of Orthodox Clergy of greater Los Angeles; marriage counselor and youth advisor; and Orthodox Chaplain to the Los Angeles County General Hospital and to the Wadsworth and Brentwood Veterans' Hospitals.

In February of 1965 he returned to academic studies and in June, 1968, he received the Doctor of Theology degree in pastoral counseling and psychology from the School of Theology at Claremont, California. His dissertation title was "Suicide and Church Canon Law." This topic was selected during his year and one-half internship at the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center.

At present he is affiliated with the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center and is counseling in a church setting attempting to establish an Orthodox Counseling Center in Los Angeles. He is also a lecturer in Orthodoxy at the School of Theology at Claremont.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

Many Epicureans, Stoics and Humanists of the past worked diligently to free man for the "good life" and discovered that they also brought into clearer focus his right to die.¹ Their opposition was a religious revulsion which attempted to provide for mankind a more genuine reverence for life and the hope for the after life.²

The traditional Roman Catholic teaching derived from Saint Augustine³ and from Saint Thomas Aquinas⁴ stated that man stands in such a relationship to God that he receives this divine gift of life from the Creator with a right of use but not of lordship. They followed as well the pre-Christian argument of Aristotle who said that suicide involves a citizen and his obligation to the

¹Louis Dublin, Suicide: A Sociological and Statistical Study (New York: Ronald Press, 1963), pp. 110-113.

²Ibid.

³Augustine, City of God (New York: Modern Library, 1950), 1:16-27.

⁴Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), II, II Q64, Art. 5.

commonwealth.⁵ They deplored suicide as being in direct violation of the sixth commandment, and man's natural inclination to love and preserve.

In spite of the strong teachings of the Church condemning suicide and seeking to discourage further this irrevocable solution to the problem of living by instituting the burial prohibitions, it seems that the practices of today's clergy does not reflect this traditional attitude.

In relatively recent years there seems to be strong indication that the Church's representatives are not adhering to the demand of canon law for justification and are resting heavily upon the "if clause" whereby the mentally infirm are not included in the burial prohibition and church condemnation.

However, we cannot deny that the role of the Church, as dictated by Christ, upon whom the Church was founded, is to "love one's neighbor as oneself."⁶ Therefore, it would appear that the Church is interested in portraying her role more meaningfully so as to minimize the incidence of suicide. As in the past, today she has to take a position also. The statistical facts about the

⁵Aristotle, The Nichomachean Ethics (New York: Putnam, 1926), V, XI.

⁶Romans 13:9.

increasing prevalence of this social problem should also generate greater concern for, and increased understanding of the individual members within the Church body.

Every thirty minutes someone in these United States kills himself. At one time, three times as many men killed themselves as did women. Since 1963, the ratio has decreased to sixty percent male and forty per cent female. Three times as many women as men attempt to kill themselves but do not die. Suicide is among the first ten killers in twenty-three of the fifty states and ranks as high as the sixth leading cause of death in one state (Nevada). It ranks as eighth cause of adult deaths in California with two thousand eight hundred and eighteen deaths in 1962.⁷

The remarks made by Karl Menninger in the forward of the book, Clues to Suicide, should be of extreme interest to the man of religion who seeks greater understanding of his fellowman, looking beyond the realm of traditional theology and canon law.

Once every minute or even more often, someone in the United States either kills himself or tries to kill himself with conscious intent; sixty to seventy times each day these attempts succeed. In many instances they could have been prevented by some of the rest of us.⁸

Realizing that there is an ever-increasing number of clergymen who are seeking higher education in the fields of sociology and psychology and that many contacts are being made with the suicide-prone and their immediate

⁷Robert Litman, "Some Facts About Suicide" (an unpublished mimeographed paper).

⁸Edwin S. Shneidman and Norman L. Farberow, Clues to Suicide (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), p. V.

families, it seems prudent to attempt to evaluate the present attitude and practice of the priest with reference to the traditional Church position on suicide.

If there exists variation between Church position and clergy practice, it would be of importance to determine the extent to which the practices of the clergy may differ from the stated position of the Church with regard to suicide.

Should the above be true, it would be appropriate to indicate further some reasons for the changing attitude on the part of the clergymen.

B. SIGNIFICANCE

If my findings indicate a prevailing attitude contrary to the formal position stated by Church canon law, it is hoped that new insights may support the Church's accepted attitude toward the suicidal person. We profess to believe that the Church is an instrument of God. Further we recognize the Church to be an independent society by affording her the privilege and power to make laws for her members. This authority is accepted when the Church manifests its sincere desire to promote God's eternal truths for the spiritual welfare of all. These laws should not be an encroachment upon one's natural human rights and privileges.

Moral theology teaches that the character of laws made by the Church should be as follows:

1. Their purpose is to guide and assist the individual that he may more easily and perfectly fulfill the laws of Christ, and to protect and promote the welfare of the Church as a whole;

2. Their contents do not impose what is the height of perfection, but what is the minimum necessary for salvation;

3. Their number, unlike that of the Synagogue, is few. There are only six precepts of the Church that bind all the faithful. The other laws of the Church do not all oblige each individual, some being for prelates, some for priests, some for religious, some for judges, etc.;

4. Their obligation is not so strict as that of the Old Testament for they are more easily changed or dispensed.⁹

It took several centuries for the Church to formulate a clear attitude toward the social problem of suicide. From a posture of permissiveness and non-condemnation she has assumed a stance of punishment and a reprisal-type reaction to this social phenomenon. Many have questioned whether Augustine¹⁰ and Thomas Aquinas¹¹ formally condemned suicide in their writings as did the fathers of the Church in council, who decreed through canon law that suicide was condemnable and should be punished by ritualistic penalties and forfeitures. The Church as an organization may have failed to deal with

⁹ Henry Davis, S. J., Moral and Pastoral Theology (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959), I, p. 419.

¹⁰ Augustine, op. cit. ¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, op. cit.

this phenomenon in ways other than fitting it into a particular moral or religious framework.

Regretfully one whole province has been left untouched. In the past there has been great concern and interest shown in the rightness or wrongness of the act itself with moral judgments being made in the name of the Church, but little effort has been expended to come to grips with why it happens and in what ways the Church may play a more meaningful role as a healer or helping agent in its prevention. This does not mitigate the importance of the moral or religious writings of the past, but does present a challenge to the clergymen of today. However, it is possible that they may be grappling with this problem, each in his own way.

In our contemporary seminary training, the theological orientation and study program fails to include this aspect of learning, this dimension in the meaning of life and death. The importance of man's act of self-destruction as a response to the circumstances of his life, which he chooses not to tolerate any longer, or which his spiritual or physical poverty cannot endure, is of consequence to the Church and her service to mankind in the name of God.

The Church through canon law has attempted to discourage suicide. It has influenced the civil laws so that

suicide was labeled a crime.¹² In numerous instances history relates that she not only tolerated but condoned the many acts of dishonor and shame upon the remains of the suicide.¹³ To add to the significance of the criminality of suicide she added the threat of eternal damnation and punishment to those who failed to preserve God's gift of life.¹⁴

Today, neither the Church nor her representatives can, without consequence to her members, continue to remain aloof to the increasing problem of suicide.

Robert Litman in his pamphlet, "Management of Acutely Suicidal Patients in Medical Practice" states:

In California for 1963, medical examiners and coroners certified approximately two thousand eight hundred deaths as suicide. Suicide was the ninth leading category of death. About ten percent of the suicides were old and sick persons, weary after sixty-five years or more of life. But the great majority of these deaths occurred in young and middle aged persons with great potentialities and responsibilities. For example, in colleges, on ships at sea, and in factories suicide was the third leading cause of death. Families, physicians and the community felt these suicide deaths as unnecessary, unreasonable and uniquely tragic. How can they be explained?

In medical practice, suicide is best understood as the final stages of a progressive breakdown of adaptional behavior occurring in an emotionally exhausted patient Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts

¹²Norman St. John Stevas, The Right to Live (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 65.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Augustine, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

and numerous kinds of suicidal communications are part of the prodromal symptomatology of suicidal crises.¹⁵

Paul Pretzel in his pamphlet, "The Clergy and Suicide Prevention," aptly phrases a challenge to the Church and her representatives:

If the Church is serious in its mission to seek out and save the lost, it cannot ignore the suicidal person who represents the extreme feeling of spiritual abandonment. It cannot fail to accept the challenge to enter the dark, forbidding world of a person seeking his own death. This is the valley where the shadow is dark and frightening indeed, but if the Church is to be true to beliefs that it professes, it must not avoid the path that leads through such dangerous territory.¹⁶

Through this study then, I hope to arouse new interest, within the Liturgical Churches and her representatives, the priests, in the problem of suicide. It may very well be true that the interest is present and that the clergy are already taking positive steps, as individuals, to resolve the problem wherein the position of judgment and penalty alienates the suicide who seeks acceptance and understanding.

¹⁵Litman, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁶Paul Pretzel, "The Clergy and Suicide Prevention" (unpublished mimeographed material), p. 6.

C. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Various factors have been considered in the formulation of the questionnaire used in this study. With the assistance and approval of the psychologists at the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center, Dr. Norman L. Farberow (Director) and Dr. Carl Wold, and using as a guide the research instrument employed by Dr. Doman Lum¹⁷ to investigate the attitude and practices of Protestant Clergymen, a three-page statistical questionnaire was prepared.

Financially assisted by a grant awarded by the Suicide Prevention Center, the questionnaire was mailed to four hundred Roman Catholic and seventy-five Eastern Orthodox priests. The four hundred names of Roman Catholic clergy were chosen at random from a directory supplied by the Chancery Office of the Los Angeles Archdiocese.

Due to the limited number of Orthodox representatives in the greater Los Angeles area, names of clergy were chosen who resided beyond the restricted area cited in the study. (See Appendix A.)

An explanatory introductory letter, the self-administered questionnaire and a stamped, return-addressed

¹⁷Doman Lum, "Suicide: Theological Ethics and Pastoral Counseling" (Unpublished Th.D. Dissertation. Claremont, 1967.

envelope were mailed to the four hundred and seventy-five priests.

After six weeks one hundred and one Roman Catholic clergymen responded (twenty-five percent) and forty-six Eastern Orthodox representatives answered (sixty-one percent).

The items of the questionnaire were classified into three major categories with appropriate subheadings:

1. Characteristics of the priest

- A. age - place of birth - United States or abroad
- B. socio-economic level of priest's family
- C. environment during formative years - rural or urban
- D. educational background
- E. total years in the priesthood

2. Priest's actual practices and beliefs

A. Dealing with suicide

- 1. no recognition - refused to bury the suicide
- 2. partial recognition - partial burial service (grave-side)
- 3. full recognition - full burial rites performed
- 4. confessional absolution of attempted suicide

B. Theological beliefs

- 1. a social or moral problem
- 2. a theological problem related to church discipline (canon law)

3. Characteristics of the parish

- A. socio-economic level of the parish
- B. rural or urban composition
- C. size of membership
- D. racial composition

My criteria for agreement or disagreement with the Church position were the canon laws as they are set forth in the Church publications which carry the "Imprimatur," i.e., the latest edition (1967) of the Catholic Encyclopedia. Reference was also made to a comparable Orthodox source book known as the "Pedalion" or "Rudder." This tome is so designated because it is to steer safely the Church, the ship of faith, through all troubled waters and keep her on course.

It was assumed that an individual respondent was in agreement with the position of the Church if he responded to item three under the heading "Practice and Beliefs" in the following manner: a) disagree, b) agree, c) agree and d) agree. Should he respond contrary to one of the above then he was assumed to disagree with the Church.

The first category was designed to cast greater light upon the possible reasons for the answers given in the section which focused on the priest's actual practice and theological beliefs.

Since canon law prohibits burial rites to those who intentionally take their own lives, the second section sought to place the priest in a category of agreement or disagreement with the Church.

He was asked to respond further to questions which were so composed as to clarify and illuminate his own theological position and interpretation of suicide. His pattern of answers indicated his particular leanings toward the sociological or theological aspects of the problem of suicide.

The general characteristics of the various parishes each priest served were also elicited. The socio-economic level of the parish and whether it was an urban or rural charge were classified with other questions requesting information about the size and racial composition of the parish served. It was hoped that this background information would enhance the researcher's ability to give feasible answers.

Percentages were tabulated with reference to groupings of agreement and disagreement with the historical position of the Church. Then Chi-squares were tabulated using the formula presented by McNemar in his book on

statistics. The formula $\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$ and the value of "p" was determined or a result thereof.¹⁸

Following the tabulation of responses, personal interviews were conducted with a selected number of Church representatives. The selection was determined by the overall pattern of a particular clergyman's responses in the questionnaire. An equal number (five) of agrees and disagrees were called upon. Importance was based upon the frequency of exposure to suicide victims or suicide attempts and the prevalence of contradictory responses.

Through the tabulation of all responses and the grouping of the questionnaires into two categories of agree and disagree, it was hoped that some definite pattern might be discerned and that some evaluative comments could be made which would then be substantiated by the findings.

D. DEFINITIONS

Canon Law

Canon law is the body of the Church law which regulates man's conduct as a member of the visible society of the Church, that is, it imposes a certain discipline on man in his external relations within that society. Human acts must conform to the laws

¹⁸Quinn McNemar, Psychological Statistics (New York: Wiley, 1955), pp. 203-212.

of the Church, since it is, for man, a divinely appointed teacher and ruler. But it is only the external relationship in the "forum externum," as it is termed, that canon law imposes specific lines of conduct, whereas, moral theology considers the obligation in conscience, termed the "forum internum," that arises whensoever the Church, through its canons imposes such definite rules of conduct.¹⁹

In the earliest Christian centuries canon law consisted primarily of episcopal acts and the decisions of Provincial and Ecumenical Councils.²⁰

Promulgation

Etymologically the word promulgation comes from the Latin pro-mulcare, or more correctly from pro-vulgare, which means "to place before the people" or "to announce to the public."²¹

A law is an expression of the will of the legislator, but since it is meant to be a norm governing the human actions of the community subject to the lawmaker, it must be officially proposed to this community as a binding rule of action. So there is included in the definition of law the element of its official notification, which is known as the promulgation of the law.²²

Promulgation then, is the final step in the process of making a law. With its promulgation a law becomes

¹⁹Davis, op. cit., p. 2.

²⁰Charles Duggan, Twelfth Century Decretal Collections and Their Importance in English History (London: University of London Athlone Press, 1963), p. 12.

²¹Martin Nicholas Lohmuller, The Promulgation of Law (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), p. 3.

²²Ibid.

endowed with all the qualities necessary to make it binding. By promulgation the law is perfected and completed, so that it begins for the first time to exist as a norm of action which is binding on the community.²³

Catholic Church (Roman)

The Church is the congregation of all baptized persons united in the same faith, the same sacrifice, the same sacraments under the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff (Pope) and the bishops in communion with him.²⁴

The author states further that in order to remain a real member of the Church after baptism, the believer must continue to profess the faith and must not withdraw from the unity of the body of the Church by schism, heresy or be excommunicated by legitimate authority because of serious sins.²⁵

The legitimate authority of the Church is to be found in the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, Christ's Vicar on earth. This is substantiated by the definition of Cardinal Bellarmine, S.J. whose statement is generally accepted by Roman Catholic theologians.²⁶

²³ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁴ Stanley J. Stuber, Primer on Roman Catholicism for Protestants (New York: Association Press, 1965), pp. 4-5.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ W. Devivier, S.J., Christian Apologetics (New York: J. Wagner, 1924), II, 4.

The Church founded by Christ is rightly defined as: "The visible society of the validly baptized Faithful, united together in one organic body by the profession of the same Christian Faith, by the participation of the same seven sacraments, and by submission to their legitimate pastors, particularly to the Roman Pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, Christ's representative and Vicar upon earth."

Catholic Church (Orthodox)

The word "Church" in its early general meaning signified an assembly of men for any purpose was later limited to gatherings for a religious purpose, and sometimes was applied to the place in which such meetings were held. Specifically under the Fathers and the theologians the word came to denote all those who constitute the people of God whether living on earth or triumphant in heaven.²⁷

Androutsos, an Orthodox dogmatician defines the Church as:

that holy foundation made by the Incarnate Word of God for the salvation, sanctification of men, hearing His own authority and authentication constituted of men having one faith and sharing the same sacraments, who are divided into lay and clergy . . . and the latter, who rule the Church, trace their beginning through unbroken succession to the Apostles, and through them to our Lord The Church's object and mission is the salvation of men, which may be conceived of as the extension and continuation of

²⁷ Frank Gavin, Some Aspects of Contemporary Greek Thought (Milwaukee: Moorhouse, 1923), p. 237.

the work of our Lord's three-fold office, as Prophet, Priest and King.²⁸

Within the hierarchy of the Church there are three grades of clergy--deacons, priests and bishops. The bishops iure divino are all equal, but iure ecclesiastico certain bishops of important cities or dioceses are distinguished from others as Archbishops, Metropolitans and Patriarchs.²⁹

Since the Schism of 1054 there have been four patriarchates--Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. The Patriarch of Constantinople is the spiritual leader of all Orthodox believers, but he does not possess the supreme authority nor the infallibility which the Roman Catholic Church has invested in the Pope.³⁰

Dogma

In its general meaning this word signifies an opinion, a precept, a decree, or a law. This word was used in the ancient schools of Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, and to their students these had a binding quality with the force of a law. We later find this word used in the sense of a decree, law or mandate in St. Luke 2:1 and Acts 17:7. To depict the precepts of

²⁸ Ibid., p. 238.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 248.

³⁰ Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 15 and 322.

Jewish Law as it is employed in Col. 2:14 and Eph. 2:15 and as the decrees of Jewish Courts, we find it appearing in II Macc. 10:8 and 15:36.³¹

According to Androutsos, dogmas in its ecclesiastical usage are divine laws, the ethical ordinances and truths regulating the Christian life and more especially the theoretical doctrines of the faith which are contained in the Holy Bible and Tradition and have been defined and explained by the Church and formulated in part by her Holy Synods. They are the authentic declarations of the faith necessary to salvation and are contained in the Bible and Tradition.³²

Jaroslav Pelikan in his book, The Riddle of Roman Catholicism, states:

In principle at least, the Roman Church has maintained this distinction. The voice of God is expressed in the divine law, whether natural or revealed [dogma], while the voice of the Church has the obligation to announce it The revealed law is binding upon believers in an absolute way, for it is divine law; it is immutable. The regulations of the Church, on the other hand, are acknowledged to be human laws, and do not possess the same authority as either the natural law or the revealed law. They may be changed and adopted, and the Church has the right to suspend them when it sees fit.³³

³¹Gavin, op. cit., p. 4.

³²Ibid., p. 5.

³³Jaroslav Pelikan, The Riddle of Roman Catholicism (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 86.

Suicide

The history of the word itself is discussed by Louis Dublin who states:

"Suicide" does not appear in the Bible or in the famous pamphlet on "Self-Homicide," by John Donne, published in 1644. It has been suggested that it was derived from the words "suist," meaning a selfish man, and "suicism," meaning selfishness The modern arbiter of English, the Oxford Dictionary, finds that "suicide" was first used in English in 1651 and is derived from the modern Latin "suicidum," which in turn stems from the Latin pronoun for "self" and the verb "to kill"

During the long period when English law distinguished between "suicide" and "felo de se," "suicide" was employed by coroners when a jury had found that the act was committed while the deceased was of unsound mind and was generally coupled with the words "while temporarily of unsound mind." On the other hand, "felo de se" was used when the deceased was considered to have been in full possession of his faculties The Oxford Dictionary also uses "murder" in defining suicide but adds a broader implication: "The act of taking one's own life, self murder." It dates the first use of "suicide" to mean a person as 1728, and gives a parallel definition: "One who dies by his own hand; one who commits self-murder. Also one who attempts or has a tendency to commit suicide."³⁴

From the above one can understand the efforts and concern of Edwin S. Shneidman to formulate a more adequate and clear definition of suicide. His straightforward attempt reads as follows:³⁵

³⁴Dublin, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

³⁵Edwin S. Shneidman, "Suicidal Phenomena: Their Definition and Classification" (Unpublished mimeographed material), p. 1.

Suicide is the human act of self-inflicted, self-intentioned cessation. At least five points are to be noted in this brief definition: (a) it states that suicide is a human act; (b) it combines both the decedent's conscious wish to be dead and his actions to carry out that wish; (c) it implies that the motivations of the deceased may have to be inferred and his behaviours interpreted by others, using such evidence as a suicide note, spoken testimony, or retrospective reconstruction of the victim's intention; (d) it states that the goal of the action relates to death, rather than to self-injury, self-mutilation, inimical or self-reducing behaviors; and (e) it focuses on the concept of cessation - the final stopping or naughtment of the individual's conscious introspective life. An explication of the concept of "cessation," as well as the related concepts of "interruption" (e.g., sleep, unconsciousness, etc.), and "altered continuation" (e.g., by means of drugs, alcohol, etc.), has been offered.

Thus, instead of treating it as something evil, sinful or pathological, suicide is understood as an attempt to fulfill a death wish by focusing energies and actions on cessation.

A definition offered by a man of religion states:

Suicide is an action or omission which of its nature will cause one's own death. It may be direct, if death itself is intended as an end or a means, whether explicitly or implicitly. Such an action, which so grievously violates the stewardship God has given to man, is of its nature gravely sinful, admitting of no lightness of matter; for it is harmful not only to the individual who thus takes authority into his own hands but to society itself and impurious to divine rights as well. It is forbidden by natural law and by divine law.³⁶

³⁶ Francis L. B. Cunningham, Theology of Christian Life (Dubuque: Priory Press, 1959), p. 509.

E. LIMITATIONS

The Orthodox Church has been included in some areas of this research study because of her common roots and basic similarities and agreements with the Roman Catholic Church, but the more thorough tabulation of findings determined through the use of the questionnaire has been limited to the clergymen of the Roman Catholic Church.

Hopefully, other investigators will be motivated by the findings of this study to further the examination of any inconsistencies with regard to Church position and Church representatives' practice concerning suicide, elsewhere in this country and possibly throughout the world.

It is assumed, however, that the overall findings of this study can be used to indicate the general practices to be found in similar metropolitan areas of this type within the Continental United States.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL POSITION OF THE CHURCH WITH REGARD TO SUICIDE

A. INTRODUCTION

Some men of religion have recognized that needs do influence beliefs, if not determine the beliefs of a given era. The matter of life and death has always held a paramount position in religious searchings and writings which attempt to reflect God's laws.

It's obvious that those who are in greatest need deserve our first attention. Need is measured by reference not only to the degree of poverty, but also the kind of good things which are lacking or endangered In extreme need . . . there are those who are threatened with loss of life or soul and who have no one else to whom they can turn for help.¹

It would appear that the fathers of the Church have been concerned with the needs of man and have reflected their concern through sensitivity to his particular and unique plight. In each age they have apparently supported man in his attempt to seek fulfillment in this life. The history of mankind illustrates the point that man, untiringly, seeks to relieve and minimize the ever-increasing tensions created by life's experiences and man's inhumanity to man.

¹R. C. Mortimer, Elements of Moral Theology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 144.

The history of Rome as related by Gibbons illustrates the aforementioned problem of man and the solution or absolution presented by the Church.

At Thessalonika a general of Theodosius had imprisoned, for just cause, a popular charioteer, and when their favorite was absent on the day of the public games the mob inhumanly murdered the general and some of his principal officers. The fiery and choleric temper of Theodosius was impatient of the dilatory forms of a judicial inquiry and the punishment of the Thessalonians was blindly committed to the undistinguishing sword of the barbarians.

The people were invited in the name of their sovereign, to the games of the circus, and then promiscuously massacred by the soldiers who had been secretly posted around the circus.

The news filled Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, with horror and anguish. His reproaches affected the Emperor deeply The Emperor proceeded in the accustomed manner to perform his devotions in the great Church of Milan. He was stopped in the porch by the Archbishop, who, in the tone and language of an ambassador of heaven, declared to his sovereign that private contrition was not sufficient to atone for a public fault or to appease the justice of an offended deity It was sufficient that the emperor of the Romans, stripped of the ensigns of royalty, should appear in a mournful and suppliant posture; and that in the midst of the Church of Milan, he should humbly solicit with sighs and tears, the pardon of his sins. After a delay of about eight months Theodosius was restored to the communion of the faithful.²

Mortimer, depicts man as being the creature of God and also under the law.³ Man is under obligation to obey

²Edmund Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (New York: Putnam, 1962), pp. 186-187.

³Mortimer, op. cit., p. 37.

the law through the condition of his nature and destiny so that he may in the future fulfill the purpose of his Creator. He is further capable of perceiving by the exercise of his reason, the broad pattern of his behavior which in turn is dictated by law. Man's reason is aided and clarified by revelation, which enhances man's ability to affirm the obligations of certain actions and increases man's cognizance of his own nature.

This natural and divine law is amplified and adopted to the changing circumstances of human life by the provisions of positive human law, ecclesiastical and civil. These, so far as they embody and reflect the law of God, impose a moral obligation to obey.⁴

Although the Church should not be viewed only in the light of her legal institutions, this aspect of the Church is an essential part of her nature and mission. Just as Bishop Ambrose found it necessary to impose his interpretation of God's law upon the Emperor Theodosius, so have other men of the Church seen fit to take similar stands in the name of God and His Church. Within the whole range of church history there is no more puzzling problem than that connected with the growth and fate of the canon laws in general, and in particular those connected with suicide.

⁴Ibid.

In the fourth century there had begun a new age for Church organization and Church authority. The neoteric position of the Church in the empire following the conversion of Constantine the Great gave impetus to the growing need for administrative structure and widespread authority.⁵

If Christianity was to fulfill its role as a uniting factor in the empire, the Church had to be united and have imperial support of her authority. The policy was to summon representatives of the Church who would meet to decide any controversies but initially this was directly under imperial control.⁶ The fathers of the Church assisted in developing a system of discipline wherein they hoped to bring into harmony unique historical conditions and particular social needs. This proved to be a Herculean task, but the effort was well-applied when we consider the fact that political, social and religious climates have changed considerably though many ancient canons still retain a contemporary vitality.⁷

⁵Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 112.

⁶Ibid., p. 113.

⁷R. C. Mortimer, Western Canon Law (London: Black, 1953), p. v.

Therefore if one is sensitive to the study of human need and social forces, it would appear that he would also become cognizant of the inevitable need to change some of the canon laws or modify their interpretation.

Schaff, in his famous work, History of the Christian Church, states that the councils sanctioned the principle of common public deliberation as the most acceptable means whereby truth could be served. When concerned with discipline decision could be made by majority vote, whereas in matters of faith, unanimity was required. In some cases coercion could be exercised by the excision of the dissentient minority.⁸

Commenting about the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Councils, he states further that they covered the entire legislation of the Church, including faith, practice, organization and worship. The doctrinal decrees were called dogmata, while disciplinary decrees were called Canones. Representing the whole church and claiming the guidance of the Spirit of truth, the decisions of the councils were supreme and final.⁹

Schaff goes on to say that the doctrinal decisions were given the quality of infallibility, but not so with the disciplinary canons (KANONES).

⁸Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), III, 339-340.

⁹Ibid.

These were never considered universally binding, like the symbols of faith; since matters of organization and usage, pertaining rather to the external form of the church, are more or less subject to the vicissitude of time.¹⁰

The Greek work for canon (KANWN), properly speaking, refers to a piece of wood commonly called a rule which artisans used to straighten the wood or stone upon which they were working.¹¹ Thus, canon law can be defined as the sum of the laws or rules framed by an ecclesiastical body for regulating and guiding the needs of its members.

According to Cicognani:

Canon law may be defined as the body of laws made by the lawful ecclesiastical authority for the government of the Church.¹²

Cicognani further comments that the theory of canon law implies that its sources are of such a nature as to have the quality to bind the whole religious body, or a specific segment of it. The laws are comprised of rules, regulations or definitions drawn up and agreed upon by a recognized Church Council. They further define and determine the organization of the Church whose function it is to direct its members toward proper conduct and assumption

¹⁰Ibid, p. 342.

¹¹D. Cummings, The Rudder (Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957), p. LIV.

¹²Amleto G. Cicognani, Canon Law (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1934), p. 43.

of given duties and/or responsibilities. The canons set forth the norm or standard in general or particular matters accepted by, and expected of, the church members as well as the governing bodies.¹³

In earlier years the church leaders, through the decisions of the various councils, decreed that those persons who committed suicide must be denied the rituals and sacraments of the Church as condemned sinners.

Canon 1240 gives a list of those who are to be refused ecclesiastical burial unless before death they give some sign of repentance:

1. Notorious apostates from the Christian faith or notorious members of heretical, schismatic or masonic sects and other societies of the same kind. The fact must be generally known that it cannot by any subterfuge be concealed.

2. Those on whom a condemnatory or declaratory sentence of excommunication or interdict has been passed. . . . Those who incur excommunication automatically by violating a law of the code are not included.

3. Those who deliberately commit suicide.

4. Those who die in a duel or from a wound received therein. . . .¹⁴

The asides have been included to reflect the tone and type of regulations and prohibitions found in canon law pertaining to burial rites.

In reference to suicide and burial privilege the canon law, as defined above as well as the following

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴P. J. Lydon, Ready Answers in Canon Law (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948), pp. 98-99.

excerpt, clearly assumes the character of justification and punishment:

Those who make an attempt upon their own life, if death follows, are to be deprived of ecclesiastical burial according to canon No. 1240; otherwise, they are to be excluded from legitimate ecclesiastical acts, and if they be clerics, are to be suspended for such a time as the Ordinary may determine and removed from benefices or offices to which the care of souls either in the internal or external forum is attached.¹⁵

The basis for this position appears to be predicated on the premise that individuals are to be held directly accountable for their actions. The prime consideration does not appear to be the awakening of contrition, nor the beseeching of God's merciful grace but payment for the offense which the criminal act demands.

Suicide, then according to the Church is construed as a crime against God which is therefore judged as sinful and punishable by Church laws. From the prescribed penalty we can surmise further that the intent of the canon law is to be authoritative and to represent the severe prohibition of the act to commit suicide.

¹⁵T. Lincoln Bouscaren and Adam C. Ellis, Canon Law - A Text and Commentary (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1946), pp. 864-865.

B. DEVELOPMENT OF CANON LAW

It can be said that canon law began in the year 325 with the Council of Nicaea. There were earlier councils which also passed canons but the Council of Nicaea was the first to receive the importance of being Ecumenical (deliberative assemblies gathered from all over the inhabited world--whence the designation "Ecumenical," meaning universal).¹⁶ The decisions made at this synod of approximately three hundred and eighteen bishops¹⁷ found their way into all collections of canon law for many hundreds of years.

So influential was the authority of the canons of the Ecumenical Councils that in the early Middle Ages they were, together with the canons of the later Ecumenical Councils, put on the level with the scriptures.¹⁸

To show the importance, the respect and the veneration in which these canons were held, R. C. Mortimer cites "The Affair of Apiarius."

Apiarius was an African cleric who early in the fifth century was degraded and excommunicated by the Church of Africa. Apiarius left Africa, made his

¹⁶D. Cummings, op. cit., p. XLI.

¹⁷Schaff, op. cit., p. 349.

¹⁸Mortimer, Western Canon Law, p. 10.

way to Italy and there appealed to the Pope. The Pope heard his case and wrote to the African bishops. The African bishops were most indignant and protested that Apiarius had no right to appeal to a "foreign" bishop, nor the Pope any right to hear such an appeal. The Pope replied that he was acting in accordance with the canons of Nicaea, . . . and he enclosed a copy . . . so they could see for themselves. The African bishops met in council at Carthage in 419. They looked at the Pope's copy of the canons of Nicaea and there, sure enough, was a canon authorising an appeal to Rome. They then looked at their own copy, . . . probably the very copy which Caecilian, Bishop of Carthage, had brought back with him from Nicaea in 325. In that copy no such canon appeared.

. . . Meanwhile they were writing to the great churches of Constantinople and Alexandria to enquire whether the disputed canon appeared in the versions of these churches. . . . The canon was not in the version of either church.

In fact the canon was one of the canons of a Council held in Sardica in 341. . . . In the Roman version of the canons of Nicaea the canons of Sardica were added on in a single numbered series. . . . So to attribute all the canons of Sardica to the Council of Nicaea was an easy and natural mistake.

This tacking the canons of one council on to those of another was the usual early way of compiling a Church law-book.¹⁹

The Church, according to the needs of a particular time, as in the case of Apiarius or an appearance of a threatening heresy, would convene and frame laws, thus giving direction and projecting a symbol of authority and truth.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 10-11.

Accordingly, the Church convenes on occasions in Ecumenical Councils and frames laws such as are best fitted to provide for the needs of the circumstances, which, nevertheless, a later council may repeal or abrogate if convinced that the grounds for their being decreed or laid down have already ceased to deserve consideration. Moreover, in the administrative province of the Church changes are quite usual, as becomes evident by reference to the history of the Church. Such changes are brought about through common decision of the Church, and not by the arbitrary will of any one person, with a view to insuring the oneness and mutual consonance of all her members in external action, as well as the solidarity of the Church as a whole.²⁰

The first collection of canons is known as the small "Pontic" collection, which consisted of the decrees of the three councils held in Pontus. They are Ancyra, Neo-Caesarea and Gangra which were held in the early fourth century. This small and early collection was given recognition by the Church and was used as a law-book at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.²¹

Soon after this period the whole collection was translated from the Greek into Latin and circulated widely in the West. Sometime later it was enlarged by compiling the decisions of the two Ecumenical Councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon; the Canons of Sardica were also included after those of Nicaea.²²

²⁰Cummings, op. cit., p. XLI.

²¹E. H. Landon, Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909), I, 134ff.

²²Ibid.

This is the manner in which canon law came into being within the Church. In all probability it began with the first law-book of the Christian Center in Asia Minor, Constantinople. This was adopted and edited to suit the needs of the Church center in Rome.²³

According to their needs the other centers must have established similar collections of canons such as Africa, Antioch, Alexandria, Milan, Arles in France, et al.²⁴

In Rome in approximately 500 A. D. a Scythian monk, Dionysius Exiguus, produced a collection of canons.²⁵ It was comprised of the various canons of the Greek Councils of Nicaea, Ancyra, Neo-Caesarea, Gangra, Antioch, Laodicea, Constantinople and Chalcedon. The canons of Sardica and the first session of the Council of Carthage, 419, were also included. Even though Dionysius considered the Apostolic Canons to be apocryphal work of the fourth century he added them to the beginning of his collection. He did this because they contained clear and important

²³ Mortimer, Western Canon Law, p. 12.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

²⁵ Charles Paulet, A History of the Catholic Church (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1949), I, 543.

provisions and also because they were quoted in some of the Papal Letters.²⁶

In his second edition Dionysius Exiguus preserved the full records of the Carthage Council and thus kept intact the "African Codex."²⁷

A few years later he published a collection of thirty-nine decretals of different Popes from the year 384 to 498. The majority of these decretals belong to Innocent the Great (402-417). From this period on the decrees of the Popes play an ever-increasing role in the Western Canon Law.²⁸

Walker describes how the promulgation of certain canon laws brought about friction between the Western and Eastern branches of Christendom during the time of Dionysius.

Innocent the I claimed for the Roman Church not only custody of apostolic tradition and the foundation of all Western Christianity, but ascribed the decisions of Sardica to the Council of Nicaea and based on them a universal jurisdiction of the Roman bishop.²⁹

He states further that Leo I (440-461) greatly influenced the result of the Council of Chalcedon.

²⁶Mortimer, Western Canon Law, pp. 13-14.

²⁷Ibid. ²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Walker, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

He emphasized the primacy of Peter among the Apostles, both in faith and government, and taught that what Peter possessed had passed to Peter's successors. These claims Leo largely made good. He ended the attempt to create an independent Gallic See in Arles; he exercised authority in Spain and North Africa. In 445, he procured an edict from the Western Emperor, Valentinian III, ordering all to obey the Roman Bishop, as having the "primacy of Saint Peter." On the other hand, the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, by its twenty-eighth canon, placed Constantinople on a practical equality with Rome. Against this action Leo at once protested; but it foreshadowed the ultimate separation, far more political than religious, between the Churches of the East and West.³⁰

Being far from perfect the canons differed in content; they have a varying standard of accuracy in the chronological order and the arrangement of the subject matter has been neglected. The use of different translations of Greek originals resulted in a wide variety of interpretations.³¹ To illustrate this example R. C. Mortimer cites the differences in canon six of Nicaea found in the various versions.

Dionysius accurately translating the Greek, has for a title, "of the privileges which belong to certain cities" and then begins with the words, "Let the ancient custom be maintained throughout Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis, that the Bishop of Alexandria has authority over them all, because this is a similar custom in the case of the Bishop of Rome; similarly with Antioch and the other provinces, let the Churches retain their privileges."³²

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Mortimer, Western Canon Law, pp. 14ff.

³²Ibid.

The Prisca version relates the same section but in this manner:

Of the Primacy of the Church of Rome and the bishops of other cities. There is an ancient custom that the Bishop of the City of Rome has an over-lordship so that he governs the neighbouring (suburban) regions and the whole province. The Bishop of Alexandria has authority throughout Egypt. Similarly with Antioch and in other provinces let the metropolitan churches retain their proper privileges.³³

From the two versions it can be readily understood how difficult it was to discern the original meaning and to avoid conflicting interpretations.

The Dark Ages of Western Europe soon set in and the old law was either ignored or overlaid by new local customs. In Spain during this period a certain type of "golden age" took place in the development of canon law which culminated in the publication of another collection known as the Hispana.³⁴

In its earliest form the Hispana dates from 633 A. D. and contains a preface, index, the Greek Councils, the African Councils, ten Gallican Councils, fourteen Spanish Councils and one hundred and four decretals. A table of ten books was set forth which exercised considerable influence on the arrangement of subsequent collections.³⁵ The subject matter is as follows:

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

1. Ordination, Orders, the life of the Clergy.
2. Monks, nuns, widows, public penitents.
3. Church courts, trials, accusations, etc., Councils, and church properties.
4. Liturgy, Baptism.
5. Marriage, sins of the flesh, murder.
6. Duties and moral conduct of clergy and of laity.
7. The Crown.
8. Theological questions.
9. Heresy.
10. Idolatry, Apostasy.³⁶

During the middle of the eighth century we find the Church of Gaul challenged by external plundering and internal decadence. Her administrative system personified confusion. The usual meetings of bishops in synod which aided in producing the collections of canon laws had been stifled. Each bishop now ruled his province in isolation. If he so desired he could acknowledge or simply ignore the rules of canon law. The quality of church leadership suffered greatly. Kings and nobles employed nepotism so as to gain control of church properties. The canon laws about ordination were ignored and men were appointed who were ill suited for the religious service and more experienced in the battlefield. Bishops and priests were ordained without concern for their faith or morals. All rule of canon law was ignored and neutralized.³⁷

This deplorable anarchy gave birth to the "Carolingian Reform" which was a movement inaugurated to

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

stem the tide of confusion and vice. This was attempted by reorganizing the hierarchy, restoring discipline among the clergy and laity and recovering the lost church properties. The leaders of this movement were Popes, Bishops and the Carolingian Emperors. Their first efforts were expended in restoring the authority of the canon laws. They sought to procure a collection of pure ancient law and received this assistance in Rome. Pope Hadrian presented Charlemagne with an enlarged edition of the old code of Dionysius. This collection came to be known as the Hadriana.³⁸

The Emperor Charlemagne returned to Gaul in 802 and convened the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in which the church representatives officially accepted the Hadriana collection of canon law.³⁹ Such Carolingian reforms brought about a two-fold offensive. The first thrust was to examine and rectify the external abuses in the church organization caused by the widespread disregard for canon law. The second was to correct the confusion and vice which had crept into the laws themselves. These reforms were centered upon a series of books known as the Penitentials.⁴⁰ Ostensibly they were handbooks used to

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰ John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, Medieval Handbooks of Penance (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 186ff.

instruct the priest, providing a clearer image of the gravity of various crimes and also stipulating an appropriate penance. They exercised a constructive influence on those Anglo-Saxon and Celtic barbaric tribes for whom they were first devised and later upon the French and Germans.⁴¹

The Penitentials attempted to awaken the spiritual being of the sinner as illustrated by the following example:

No priest or pontiff can treat the wounds of a sinner or take away the sins from their souls unless in view of the pressing necessity he brings solicitude and prayers and tears. Therefore it is needful for us to be solicitous on behalf of sinners, since we are "members one of another" and "if one member suffers anything at all the members suffer with it." And, therefore, if we see anyone fallen in sin, let us make haste to call him to penance by our teachings.⁴²

The Venerable Bede who is said to have written the preface of the Penitentials states:

For all are to be weighed in one and the same balance, although they be associated in one fault, but there shall be discrimination for each of these, that is: between rich and poor; freeman and slave; little child, boy youth, young man, old man; stupid, intelligent; layman, cleric and monk; bishop, presbyter, deacon, subdeacon, reader, ordained or unordained; married or unmarried; pilgrim, virgin, canoness, or nuns; the weak, the sick, the well. He shall make a distinction for the character of the sins or of the man; a continent person or one who is incontinent, wilfully or by accident; in public or in secret; with

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 283.

what degree of compunction he makes amends by necessity or by intention; the places or times.⁴³

From the above quotation one may understand why casuistry and moral theology found a sustaining role in canon law.

C. ROMAN AND GREEK ERA

According to most authorities, in ancient Greece and Rome, suicide was not considered a sin. In legends and the writings of Homer it was treated with a degree of admiration.⁴⁴

However, as Louis Dublin points out, there were certain prominent leaders who disapproved of suicide on various grounds, of which the most important was religion.⁴⁵

He states that Pythagoras and Plato regarded individuals as God's soldiers who were placed in appointed posts of duty which they should not abandon. In doing so, they felt man would then rebel against his maker. Pythagoras forbade men "to depart from their guard or station in life without the order of their commander--that is, God." Plato affirmed this view, but he also objected to suicide as an unnatural act. Since man is his own closest friend,

⁴³Ibid., p. 283.

⁴⁴Louis Dublin, Suicide: A Sociological and Statistical Study (New York: Ronald Press, 1963), p. 110.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 111.

he thus has no right to injure himself. He felt further that suicide was a cowardly act and an offense against the State, which would then lose a citizen.

Dublin goes on to say that Aristotle stressed even more emphatically his condemnation of suicide, using patriotic principles as his premise. He felt that men owed their lives to their country, for them to abandon life voluntarily was equivalent to a criminal neglect of their civil duty. He felt firmly that the individual should be treated with ignominy because thereby he inflicted an injury upon the State. On the other hand, Plutarch held that true courage is shown in the manly endurance of suffering and that suicide being an act of flight is an act of cowardice and a deed unworthy of man.

Under Roman law, suicide was not always a crime. It was recognized as a personal right of an individual but with two exceptions and these were based on military, political and financial considerations.⁴⁶ As Aristotle had pointed out the loss to the State of its citizen, Rome emphasized this same point while particularly condemning the suicide of soldiers. The soldier who killed himself was regarded as a deserter of the first degree.⁴⁷ Against suicide was the order of Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 137.

⁴⁷Ibid.

King of Rome (600 B.C.), stating that all soldiers who killed themselves were to be exposed on crosses in public places. This decree put an end to a growing epidemic of suicide that was affecting the morale of the Army. Hadrian in 117 A.D. declared the attempt of soldiers to destroy themselves was equivalent to desertion and made it a capital offense.⁴⁸

There is a contrast that can be made between the attitudes of the Greeks and Romans in regard to suicide. In Greece much of the condemnation emanated from religious concepts and ideology. They believed that man's existence could only be attributed to the will of the gods. As a servant of the dieties, man's voluntary departure could only be construed as an act of rebellion against the divine beings. For this reason the inflicted penalties were of an ecclesiastical nature manifesting direct concern for the type of honor or dishonor accorded the corpse. In the city of Thebes the person who committed suicide was deprived of funeral rites, and subsequently his name and memory were subjected to ridicule and defamation. In Athens, however, the hand of the suicide responsible for the evil deed was cut off and buried apart from the rest of the body. But suicide was accepted, as in the

⁴⁸Ibid.

case of Socrates, where a public execution was held and the citizen took his own life because of court decision.⁴⁹

Plato, reflecting the thinking and attitude of his time, states:

. . . the suicide, who deprives himself by violence of his appointed share of life, not because the law of the state requires him, nor yet under the compulsion of some painful and inevitable misfortune which has come upon him, nor because he has had to suffer from irremediable and intolerable shame, but who from sloth or want of manliness imposes upon himself an unjust penalty . . . they who meet their death in this way shall be buried alone, and none shall be laid by their side; they shall be buried ingloriously in the borders of the twelve portions of the land, in such places as are uncultivated and nameless, and no column or inscription shall mark the place of their interment.⁵⁰

In Rome the contrary was true, for penalties were assigned to those who committed suicide in an attempt to escape ignominy. If an individual was under indictment and the offense was punishable by death, banishment, or confiscation of goods, and the accused had killed himself, his property would automatically revert to the State. Another law provided that if a man killed himself before trial, his heirs could receive their inheritance provided they could prove his innocence and thus win an acquittal. Another law declared that suicide annulled the bequest a husband had made to his wife, although bequests to other

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 136-137.

⁵⁰ B. Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. 2 (New York: Random House, 1937), p. 618.

persons remained valid.⁵¹ Briefly, then, the leading motive supporting the Roman Law was to prevent loss of State revenue. By the enactment of these laws, the treasury of the Emperor could be enhanced greatly.

The Stoics, however, were more receptive to the intellectual and ideological aspects of suicide. They emphasized the rationality of such a decision, insisting that it not be made in a rash act of momentary impulse nor a result of confusion and temporary distress. A true Stoic must make a decision only after extensive deliberation and intensive self-examination. All arguments for suicide and opposing it were to be considered thoroughly. Since life and death were viewed with an attitude of indifference, they possessed no unique value of being good or bad. Each Stoic was to choose the more preferable, life or death.⁵²

Epictetus, a well-known and honored Stoic of his period clearly stated that he considered it an important duty of man to suffer greatly before he sacrificed his own life.

⁵¹James J. O'Dea, Suicide: Studies on its Philosophy, Causes and Prevention (New York: Putnam, 1882), p. 115.

⁵²St. John Stevas, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

If you like not life, you may leave it; the door is open; get you gone! But a little smoke ought not to frighten you away, but should be endured, and will thereby be surmounted.⁵³

However, Seneca offers a very moving apology for the act of suicide. During the reign of Nero he witnessed much corruption and human sacrifice.

To death alone it is due that life is not a punishment, that erect beneath the frowns of fortune, I can preserve my mind unshaken. . . . Slavery loses its bitterness when step by step I can pass to liberty. Against all the injuries of life, I have the refuge of death. Wherever you look there is the end of evils. You see the yawning precipice--there you may descend to liberty. You see that sea, that river, that well--liberty sits at the bottom. Do you seek the way to freedom? You may find it in every vein of your body. Man should seek the approbation of others in his life; his death concerns himself alone. That is the best which pleases him most. . . . The eternal law has decreed nothing better than this, that life should have but one entrance and many exits. Why should I endure the agonies of disease, the cruelties of human tyranny, when I can emancipate myself from all my torments? . . . For this reason, but for this alone, life is not an evil--that no one is obliged to live If life pleases you, live. If not, you have a right to return whence you came.⁵⁴

D. THE JUDAIC TRADITION

The universality of the phenomenon of suicide is certain. Since earliest Old Testament periods we have recorded incidents wherein biblical figures took their

⁵³Dublin, op. cit., p. 114.

⁵⁴William E. H. Lecky, History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1921), I, 217ff.

own lives intentionally. Despite this fact there is no clear statement of Jewish ethical principle on suicide. In the six cases mentioned none of the passages expresses a condemnation of suicide.

Abimelech committed suicide to escape the disgrace of being killed by a woman.⁵⁵ During the seige of the Tower of Thebez, a woman among the beleaguered cast a stone which severely wounded him. Abimelech then killed himself rather than have it said that he had been slain by a woman.

The second incident is when Samson brought about his own destruction by shaking down the roof of the great Philistine hall and thus killing many of their noblemen and himself.⁵⁶ He punished the enemies of Israel for taking his sight and thus, as it is said, brought divine retribution upon an insolent people.

Another was when the wounded Saul fell on his sword rather than have the Philistines thrust him through and make a mockery of him.⁵⁷ His armor-bearer, seeing that Saul was dead, also fell upon his sword and died alongside his master. *

⁵⁵Judges 9:54.

⁵⁶Judges 16:30.

⁵⁷I Samuel 31:4.

* Variant tradition II Samuel 1:1-10.

The fourth suicide was Ahitophel who, when Absalom rejected his counsel to march on his father, David, went home and hanged himself.⁵⁸ This self-destruction appears to be the only deliberate one recorded in the Old Testament yet Ahitophel was buried with ritual in the sepulchre of his father.

During the time of the Maccabees, Razias, a patriotic leader of Jerusalem, chose to destroy himself rather than fall into enemy hands.⁵⁹

After reigning seven days in Tirzah, Zimri closed himself in the palace and set fire to all that would burn.⁶⁰ He destroyed himself in this conflagration in order to escape being captured and punished for his sinful ascension to the throne.

Later, however, Josephus, the renowned historian of the first century A.D., relates that at his time in Judea, the remains of the suicide were not given the usual burial honors. The remains of the deceased were not buried until after sunset and were not carried to the grave with the customary funeral rites.⁶¹

⁵⁸ II Samuel 17:23.

⁵⁹ II Maccabees 14:41.

⁶⁰ I Kings 16:18.

⁶¹ R. S. Guernsey, Suicide: A History of the Penal Laws Relating To It In Their Legal, Social, Moral and Religious Aspects in Ancient and Modern Times (New York: L. Strouse, 1883), p. 8.

By the first quarter of the second century the extant oral law and traditional law had been committed to manuscripts. This extensive compilation of law is known as the Mishnah. The Mishnah is a systematic collection of religious-legal decisions. These traditional laws were codified by Rabbi Judah Hannasi about 200 C. E.⁶² Concerning the remains of the individual who has committed suicide it rules:

. . . For one who has committed suicide, no funeral rites are performed, no mourning is observed, no lamentation is made; but the relatives stand in line (to be comforted), the Mourner's Benediction is recited and all that is intended as a matter of honor for the living is done.

Who is regarded as a suicide? Not he who climbing up to the roof fell and died, but one who said: "Look! I am climbing up to the top of the roof." If he was seen ascending it, agitated by anger or fear, and then fell and died, the presumption is that he committed suicide. But if he is found strangled or hanging from a tree, or slain, or fallen upon his sword, his status is that of any other person who died.⁶³

The latest codes of Jewish law date from the sixteenth century. Gerald Friedlander made an interesting compilation pertaining to suicide which reflects the present day position held by the Orthodox Jew.

. . . There is none more wicked than one who has committed suicide, as it is said: "And surely your blood of your lives will I require." (Genesis IX,5).

⁶²Hershman, M. Abraham, Trans., The Code of Maimonides (Mishnah Torah) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), XIV, p. 316.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 165-166.

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been fairly stable and relatively low, ranging from eight per one hundred thousand in 1952 to ten in 1958.⁶⁶

During the German program of extermination suicide grew in epidemic proportions. The statistics of some observers reflected the extent to which the levels of suicide rose among the Jewish population awaiting deportation in the overrun countries.⁶⁷

The rigidity of the law and its strict observance by pious Jews have been suggested as the reason for the low rate of suicide among the people of the Covenant. The extreme provocations and the demoralizing effect of anti-semitism, increasing individualism, the weakening of religious authority and tradition, had played an important role in the high suicide rate during World War II. Having returned to their own Republic the incidence has again returned to a low rate.

An interesting aside is the study of Gillespie and Allport in which they sent questionnaires to students in ten different countries.⁶⁸ They were investigating youth's outlook on the future. One of the questions asked was, "Do you feel that you require some form of

⁶⁶Suicide and Attempted Suicide in Israel (1949-1959) (Tel Aviv: Central Bureau of Statistics).

⁶⁷Dublin, op. cit., p. 77.

⁶⁸J. M. Gillespie and Gordon W. Allport, Youth's Outlook on the Future (New York: Doubleday, 1955).

religious orientation or belief in order to achieve a fully mature philosophy of life?"

According to the table it was interesting to note the laxity of religious orientation manifested in the Israel sample. Seventy-three percent of the men and sixty percent of the women responded no or doubtful. It is possible that the military atmosphere or the political facets of Israel, at the time of the survey, may have influenced their response. Perhaps the historic vicissitudes may be perceived negatively by the youth of Israel.

Durkheim states something which may be informative at this juncture since statistically Judaism of all religions counts the fewest suicides.⁶⁹

But if the Jew manages to be both well-instructed and very disinclined to suicide, it is because of the special origin of his desire for knowledge. It is a general law that religious minorities, in order to protect themselves better against the hate to which they are exposed or merely through a sort of emulation, try to surpass in knowledge the population surrounding them. . . . The Jew, therefore, seeks to learn, not in order to replace his collective prejudices by reflective thought, but merely to be better armed for the struggle. For him it is a means of offsetting the unfavorable position imposed on him by opinion and sometimes by law. And since knowledge by itself has no influence upon a tradition in full vigor, he superimposes this intellectual life upon his habitual routine with no effect of the former upon the latter. This is the reason for the complexity he presents. . . . He thus combines the advantages of severe discipline characteristic of small and ancient

⁶⁹Emile Durkheim, Suicide: A Study in Sociology (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 167.

groups with the benefits of the intense culture enjoyed by our great societies. He has all the intelligence of modern man without sharing his despair.⁷⁰

E. THE EARLY CHURCH AND SUICIDE

In the early Church the condemnation of suicide was not very clear or defined. The Apostles did not regard this rather common practice of their time as condemnable. The New Testament makes no direct statement about this question except in its recording of Judas' hanging himself following his betrayal of our Lord. Even though St. Augustine condemned suicide officially and considered it tantamount to self-homicide, religious sentiment did not legislate against it.⁷¹ It was not until the fourth century, as recorded in the "Rudder," that the first Church law appeared in which suicide was condemned by law.

The Christian theology on suicide was formulated by St. Augustine in the "City of God" and by other fathers of the early Church, notably by St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Irenaeus and St. Athanasius. Augustine's attention was concentrated on suicide by the activities of the Circumcelliones. This was a sect whose members sought out martyrdom in order to enter paradise and when they were frustrated in their attempts to become martyrs, threw themselves off high cliffs "till the rocks bellowe (sic) were reddened with their blood."⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 167-168.

⁷¹ Dublin, op. cit., p. 139.

⁷² St. John Stevas, op. cit., p. 59.

According to western authors writing on the subject of suicide, the first official religious body to discuss suicide denounced it as a diabolical inspiration. This condemnation was expressed at the council of Arles, France, held in the year 452 A.D.⁷³

At the Council of Orleans (533 A.D.) twenty-six archbishops and bishops met and published twenty-one canons.⁷⁴ Canon 15 denied funeral rites to suicides accused of crime though it allowed burial rites to ordinary criminals. It forbade the churchmen to accept the bequests of suicides, yet permitted those persons killed in the commission of any crime.

A century later at the Council of Braga (563 A.D.) the Church took another decisive step. All suicides were to be penalized.

"For those that kill themselves there shall be no commemoration at the oblation (mass) nor shall they be brought to burial with psalms."⁷⁵

Twenty-two years later, the Council of Auxerre (585 A.D.) in Canon 17 rejected the oblations of the suicides and reaffirmed the former condemnations of this act.⁷⁶

⁷³Dublin, op. cit., p. 139.

⁷⁴Landon, op. cit., II, 7.

⁷⁵Fedden, op. cit., p. 134.

⁷⁶Landon, op. cit., I, 64.

The Antisidor Council of 590 reinforced the decisions previously made by the earlier councils.

If any kill themselves "istorum oblatu non recipiantur" their offerings shall not be received.⁷⁷

It would seem that the Church had difficulty adhering to her own position. There was undoubtedly an air of confusion created by those who were not convinced of the wrongness of suicide. The desire to make offerings to the Church clearly manifests the desire to seek expiation for any probable sin or condemnation of their family. The Church may have been roundly challenged by the indigent who could not make substantial offerings so she reiterated her previous position more emphatically.

In 750 A.D., the fifth chapter of the second book of the Penitentials of Egbert, Archbishop of York, adds the limitation, "If they do it by the instigation of the devil"; and the fifteenth of the canons published in King Edgar's time (960 A.D.) adds a further qualification in the words, "If they do it voluntarily by the instigation of the devil."⁷⁸

Fedden in his book, Suicide, reminds us that during the first half of the eighth century the Venerable Bede had affirmed the theory of the self-inflicted nature of Christ's death on the cross although ideas more favorable

⁷⁷Fedden, op. cit., p. 134.

⁷⁸Dublin, op. cit., p. 139.

to suicide did not take practical shape until after the ninth century.⁷⁹

In 829 A.D., the definitive text of the Penitentials was issued. This text provided that masses should be said for insane suicides, and prayers for those who committed suicide through the vexations of the devil.⁸⁰ The appearance of this insanity clause has been the lever of those in subsequent years who have attempted to modify suicide legislation.

But this type of protected and qualified leniency towards suicide was not to last. Following the downfall of Charlemagne's premature civilization the old attitude of absolute condemnation returned.⁸¹

A rubric in the prayer book prefixed to the burial service after the restoration of 1660, reveals the old outlook unaltered. It reads as follows: "Here it is to be noted, that the office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicated, or have laid violent hand on themselves." Thus it is fair to say that from the thirteenth century, the canon law of suicide has remained fundamentally unaltered.⁸²

The order of the burial of the dead as reflected by Neil and Willoughby in their book, The Tutorial Prayer Book, which was printed in 1912, brings into focus the teachings of the Church as related to the Eastern

⁷⁹ Fedden, op. cit., pp. 143-144.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., p. 135.

Liturgies and the Latin Service Book.⁸³ This effort was made to provide a comprehensive and yet concise manual for the layman as well as the clergy. They state that the first rubric prohibits the use of this office in regard to three classes of persons: the unbaptized, suicides and the excommunicated. The same were prohibited Christian burial by the ancient ecclesiastical canons.⁸⁴

Suicides are they who have destroyed themselves with a full knowledge of what they were doing and in whose case the jury at the coroner's inquest has returned a verdict of felo-de-se. It does not include those who have laid violent hands upon themselves in temporary or permanent mental derangement. Till recently it was the barbarous practice to bury suicides at cross roads, the corpse having been thrust through with a stake; still later the law was severe, burial only being allowed at night without any religious service and all property reverting to the crown. The general feeling that it is wanton cruelty thus to penalize the living for the desperate deed of the dead has put an end to these laws, but the difficulty is thrust upon the minister with regard to Christian burial. That difficulty is minimized by the fact that our Reformed Office is composed for the mourners, with a careful exclusion, in 1552, of prayers for the deceased. . . .⁸⁵

Even though England broke away from Rome, a large portion of the Canon Law remained in force within the established Anglican Church. The traditional attitude of condemnation of suicide remained unaltered. The Protestant Church continued the practice and the traditional

⁸³Charles Neil and J. M. Willoughby, The Tutorial Prayer Book (London: Harrison Trust, 1912), p. 473.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 474.

position regarded suicide as a sin, similarly manifested in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.⁸⁶

Donne in his book, Biathanatos, published in 1644 by his son after his father's death, showed Donne's deep concern for the Church's position and the use of canon law.⁸⁷ He firmly felt that there was no dogma of the Church that could condemn self-homicide, as he called it, and that to uphold suicide was not something condemnable or heretical or against reason. Though it may be construed as a sin against the law of self-preservation he felt that this, like any other law, has its admitted exceptions. He made a distinction between true canon law and the canons promulgated by smaller councils other than Ecumenical. He pointed out that at the Council of Antisidor only one bishop was present. To allow one person to decree on so important an issue was not, according to Donne, good churchmanship nor binding.

He argued further that suicide was never condemned formally as being criminal according to canon law and pointed out the fact that the Council of Braga directed prohibitory laws toward the practice of tilting at tournaments which was categorized, along with suicide, as being

⁸⁶Dublin, op. cit., p. 140.

⁸⁷John Donne, Biathanotos (New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930).

denied burial rights. Being killed in a tilt while participating in a tournament was certainly not condemned as a criminal death. He then concluded that the canon law punishing suicide is not a law which reflects accepted orthodox dogma, but an exaggerated expression of prejudice. He firmly believed that the fathers of the Church placed God in a position of uncharitable limitation when they declared self-homicide "above all other sins, irremissible."

F. PRESENT POSITION

The following information was taken from the pages of the most-recently-published Catholic Encyclopedia.⁸⁸

The legal system of the Church always has had and will have its own distinctive nature and characteristics by reason of the distinctive nature and mission of the society that it serves.

The external, visible organization of the Church is not to be considered separate from its interior, supernatural structure. According to the Vatican Council II "as the assumed nature inseparably united to Him (Christ) serves the divine word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the visible structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it in the building up of the body."⁸⁹

Canon law, like everything else in the Church that is constituted with the cooperation of men, is and always

⁸⁸"Canon Law," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), III, 29.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 30.

will need to be improved. It is the task of the canonists to use their talents to perfect the juridic system of the Church and thus contribute to the building up of the body of Christ "unto a perfect man, unto the mature measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."⁹⁰

The only ones permitted to make law in the strict sense are those who possess supreme authority in a society. In the ecclesiastical society, this authority rests with the Pope and with the universal episcopacy acting in union with the Pope. Their duty to legislate for the universal Church can therefore be expressed in the form of Papal law (instituted by the Pope alone) or of conciliar law (instituted by the Ecumenical Council).⁹¹ Furthermore, the Church can change substantially those laws that are not based on the divine, positive and natural law. The laws of the Church are intended to be of a permanent nature, but they must be based on, and in accord with, actual conditions if they are to be effective. A law is said to be abrogated when it is totally suppressed without replacement or absorbed into a new one; derogated, when it is modified by a new law.⁹²

⁹⁰ Ephesians 4:12-13.

⁹¹ "Canon Law," op. cit., p. 31.

⁹² Ibid.

In the institution of ecclesiastical laws there are several phases but the most important one is its promulgation. This is the official publication of the law whereby it is fully established and officially made known to the community it is to bind. According to the Code of Canon Law, laws enacted by the Pope are to be promulgated by their publication in the Acta Apostolicae Sedis (C.I.C. C. 8. 1,9.) Papal laws do not ordinarily become binding until three months after announcement in the Acta.⁹³

Ecclesiastical laws can cease to exist as law without any positive intervention by legitimate authority in two cases: 1. if the circumstances become such that the law becomes positively harmful or unreasonable; 2. if the purpose of the law has entirely ceased for the community.⁹⁴

They may cease to exist by a positive act of legitimate authority. The promulgation of a new law can revoke a former law (C.I.C., C. 22), if the later law is equal in extension to the former law, making it impossible for the two to stand together; or if it deals entirely with the subject matter of the former law. If the later law is universal and the former particular, the later law must expressly mention the former in order to repeal it.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 32.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

However, in cases of doubt both the later and former laws are to be considered still binding and reconciled if possible.⁹⁵

Pope Pius X exercised the consideration above. He deemed it necessary to undertake the task left undone by his predecessor so on March 19, 1904, he formally announced his intention to modify and create a new codification of the Canon Law. He appointed a commission of cardinals to assume the general responsibility under the guidance of Cardinal P. Gasparri.⁹⁶ The cardinal was directly responsible for the actual work done by another group known as the "Council of Consultors." They in turn, enlisted the aid of all bishops and Catholic Universities asking for collaborators in this work. Having completed various sections of the overall study, each portion was sent to the participating bishops and to the major superiors for their comments and judgments. By the end of 1914, the new collection of Canon Law, the "Codex Iuris Canonici" (C.I.C.) was practically completed.⁹⁷ On May 27, 1917, Pentecost, it was promulgated by Pope Benedict XV and was accepted as fully binding and effective on

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Kenneth Scott Latourette, Christianity in a Revolutionary Age (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), IV, 27.

⁹⁷"Canon Law," op. cit., pp. 49ff.

Pentecost, May 19, 1918.⁹⁸ The C.I.C. was declared by most Church officers as a work of great value. The laws were drawn up in short articles, canons, as had been the tradition, and although there were certain defects, these were amply compensated by the code's qualities.⁹⁹

World War II and many other current events, e.g., the latest Vatican Ecumenical Council, caused a profound need for greater modification. It was felt generally that a complete revision of the Code of Canon Law was again inevitable. Pope John XXIII did finally decide to proclaim the need for a modernization of the Code of Canon Law. On March 28, 1963, he announced the formation of a new commission to begin the task of revision. To this commission twenty-nine cardinals were appointed immediately and consultants were also designated by the commission president.¹⁰⁰

Pope Paul VI, as early as June 22, 1963, revealed his support of his predecessor's desire for a new revision. He subsequently manifested his genuine concern for the completion of this task by increasing the number of cardinals to forty-one members on the commission. The C.I.C., now under revision, has retained much of the former law; it has modified some of it and introduced some new legislation. It has been divided into five books:

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

1. General norms; 2. On Persons; 3. On Things; 4. Processes; 5. Crimes and Punishment. In all there are two thousand four hundred and fourteen canons.¹⁰¹

Until the new codification is promulgated, Bouscaren relates the present position of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to burial prohibitions as determined by Canon Law 1240, as follows:

The privation of ecclesiastical burial by canon law (C.I.C. c.1240) has the nature of a penalty and hence is to be strictly interpreted; moreover, any sign of repentance before death excuses from the penalty; this means some positive sign such as calling for a priest, kissing a crucifix, an expressed desire not to die without the sacrament. In doubt, the ordinary is to be consulted but if the doubt is in favor of the deceased remains, the decision should be in his favor. . . .

Suicides are included in this privation only if their act was deliberately and notoriously so; the word "notorious" does not occur in the actual text. It is correctly inferred from the fact that suicides are classed with other public and manifest sinners: such "notoriety" will be rare and scandal unlikely, where the, more or less, common opinion prevails that suicide usually results from nervous or mental derangement.¹⁰²

This interpretation seems to be incongruous with the actual historical and traditional position of the Church. Due to the modified civil law approach to suicide the Church seems to have deigned it more prudent not to project the punitive aspects of this Canon Law. The

¹⁰¹Lydon, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁰²Bouscaren, op. cit., p. 619.

attitude is one of compassion as Cicognani admonishes the leaders of the Church to practice patience and forbearance.

Let the monition of the Council of Trent . . . be kept in mind! The bishops and all other Ordinaries be first of all admonished to bear in mind that they are pastors and not strikers, and that they ought so to preside over those subject to them, as not to lord it over them, but to love them as sons and brethren; and to strive, by exhortation and admonition to deter them from what is unlawful that they may not be obliged, should they transgress, to coerce them by due punishment . . . seeing that benevolence towards those to be corrected often effects more than austerity; exhortation more than menace; charity more than power¹⁰³

The "Rudder" states the Eastern Orthodox position cogently and ostensibly aligns its response to that of the Roman Catholic Church. This canon is attributed to Timothy of Alexandria (371-388) and is known as the fourteenth canon.¹⁰⁴

The Clergyman ought to discern in his (suicide) behalf whether he was actually and truly out of his mind when he did it. For oftentimes those who are interested in the victim and want to have him accorded an offering and a prayer in his behalf will deliberately lie and assert that he had no control of himself. Sometimes, however, he did it as a result of influence exercised by other men, or somehow otherwise as a result of paying too little attention to circumstances, and no offering (service) ought to be made in his behalf. It is incumbent, therefore, upon the clergyman in any case to investigate the matter accurately, in order to avoid incurring judgment.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Cicognani, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁰⁴ Cummings, op. cit., p. 889.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 898.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND STATISTICAL RESULTS

The point of focus in this chapter will be the instrument used to survey statistically the attitudes of clergymen in the Church toward suicide and their respective practices as related to the stated position of the Church as stipulated in Canon Law 1240 (see page 63).

The manifest concerns and considerations are discussed in four areas: 1) Statistical Significances of Items - Using the results of the findings, the statistical significance of each item was determined through computations using the formula $X^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$ yielding a Chi-square (X^2). This test of significance was applied to each question of the three major subdivisions - Personal Data, Attitude Toward Suicide and Parish Characteristics. (See Appendix A) 2) Personal Interviews - A total of ten clergymen was visited in an effort to have each elucidate on the reasoning used in responding to the questionnaire. Five (5) priests were chosen from those in agreement with the traditional stand of the Church and five (5) others were visited because their responses indicated a position contrary to that stipulated by Canon Law. 3) Pertinent Literature - The literature amplifying the findings of this study will be cited at the appropriate junctures in

the ensuing discussion. 4) Personal Evaluation - My own insights are presented from reflections on my readings, from the personal interviews conducted with the respondents to the questionnaire, and especially from the experience of working with the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center staff.

As was stated previously, four hundred questionnaires were mailed at random to the Roman Catholic clergy of the Los Angeles Archdiocese and seventy-five identical questionnaires were sent to representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Church. However, because the number of Orthodox clergymen within the selected Los Angeles area is very limited, names of priests were chosen who serve in all parts of the United States.

In a discussion of the various aspects of my questionnaire and the anticipated problems in its use, one member of the Suicide Prevention Center staff commented that there may be resistance to this study which would be manifested by a paucity of responses. He was of the opinion that it would be similar to the suicidal situation, in which the hidden suicidal thoughts inside most persons makes it difficult for them to respond. The scientific and theological discussion of the issue of suicide would also undoubtedly provoke varied forms of resistance. This reaction was soon experienced inasmuch as three-fourths of the recipients of the questionnaire failed to respond to

the questionnaire. Of the four hundred recipients, one hundred and one (101) mailed their returns. Of that total number, fifty (50) were determined as being in opposition to the Church's canon law, whereas fifty-one (51) agreed. Inasmuch as the sample utilized in this study was chosen at random and, in which the respondent population was almost evenly divided between those taking an affirmative and negative position vis a vis the Church, the number of respondents will be considered as sufficient for statistical evaluation and the purposes of this study.

The items of the questionnaire were analyzed utilizing the Chi-square statistical method and two categories were designated, i.e., those which could be identified as being significant and those which were insignificant within the stated limits.

The procedure utilized to assess the various items of the study will be stated in the order of their tabulated significance and will then proceed to those items which were found to be insignificant. Each item will be examined using the four previously mentioned approaches. (See Appendix A for specific items.)

A. DISTINGUISHING ITEMS

The significant items were found to be related to the respondents' attitude toward suicide. Under the subtitle, "Practice and Beliefs," Item A, Number 1 (which is significant at $p < .001$) inquired as to the number of persons the respondents have counseled who have expressed suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, or who later committed suicide. In all three categories, those who disagreed with the position of the Church had a greater total number of contacts (57%); whereas those who agreed with the Church had a fewer number (43%) of the overall total of one thousand nine hundred and ninety-five cases.

Later interviews substantiated the fact that greater exposure to the personal crises and pressures which their parishioners experienced had a definite influence upon the priest's particular interpretation of canon law. Those who agreed with the Church were men who had limited contacts with suicides. One priest who had recently been reassigned from a teaching position of some sixteen years duration to serve as a hospital chaplain spoke with pronounced emotion on his former lack of appreciation for the suicide's problems and needs. Although he had been in agreement with the Church's position, he felt his own position was becoming closer to disagreement.

Nearly twice as many contacts with persons who have attempted suicide were recorded by those who disagree with the position of the Church. Usually the priests will learn of these abortive attempts through the sacrament of confession. Through the interviews all priests, to a man, related that they had not found one person who manifested suicidal tendencies to be without some type of emotional stress or undue financial pressures. The suicidal's predicament seemed to generate increased confusion within him, which then led to some degree of self-inflicted damage.

Stengel in his book, Suicide and Attempted Suicide, states the hazards involved in defining what constitutes a suicidal attempt.¹ He illustrates the problems involved in defining intentions. Is a person who, desiring a "good sleep," takes an overdose of pills regarded as a suicidal attempt? What of the teenager who wants to impress upon her boyfriend the degree of her anger and in his presence swallows a large amount of her mother's sleeping pills?

Stengel offers a helpful definition used by doctors and other professionals who are called upon to define the various acts of attempted self-destruction.

¹Erwin Stengel, Suicide and Attempted Suicide (Baltimore: Penguin Book, 1964), pp. 71-72.

A suicidal attempt is an act of self-damage inflicted with self-destructive intention, however vague and ambiguous. Sometimes this intention has to be inferred from the patient's behavior.²

Because the person is muddled and confused in his thinking, just as he usually is whenever confronted with the pressure of a particular failure, is the Church to penalize this member of the parish? The question that is asked by the priest who is directly involved with the problems of those who seek help relates to his immediate responsibility to the person's attempt to resolve emotional problems, social or financial stress.

In further discussion with the clergymen who were interviewed, the main thrust of the conversation on this particular item of the questionnaire was centered upon the psychological factors involved with suicides and attempted suicides. There exists a general feeling of inadequacy in evaluating the seriousness of suicidal threats and of coping with the problems involved in constructively assisting the person in crisis.

Paul Pretzel in his mimeographed pamphlet, "Training Ministers in Suicide Prevention," relates that there are several factors which are to be considered in assessing suicidal danger.³ Is the person's character one of

²Ibid., p. 72.

³Paul Pretzel, "Training Ministers in Suicide Prevention" (Unpublished mimeographed material), pp. 2-4.

pronounced stability or instability? The unstable person is more prone to act out in an impulsive way and presents a greater problem in effective use of prevention techniques. The more stable individual in acute crisis does present a momentary serious threat but, unlike the former, has a more hopeful prognosis. The symptomatology is also of importance for it should be carefully noted whether extreme depression is due to schizophrenic confusion or neurotic reaction.

The degree and type of stress should also be determined. Pretzel offers the example of one who has recently lost a loved one, spouse or parent, with whom the individual has lived over a long period of time. This is cited as a serious and significant factor in determining the lethality of the "cry for help."

The extensiveness of one's plans to do away with oneself is important. The lethality can be determined by the specificity of time, place, date and predetermined weapon or method. (See Appendix B.)

After having evaluated the reasons surrounding the individual's decision to do harm to himself, an important first step in formulating a plan for needed prevention and therapy is to determine the resources which the suicidal has at his disposal, i.e., family members, significant others, social contacts, professional assistance, employment, finances, etc.

Knowing what to do in time of crisis, having the knowledge to formulate an appropriate reasonable and helpful plan of action is a major contribution in reducing the anxiety of the therapist. . . . The determination of specifically what helps are to be mobilized will, of course, depend upon the specific need and resources of the individual patient. In some suicidal crises hospitalization will be considered and this decision will be made most often in consultation with appropriate professional help.⁴

Item A, Number 2, with a level of significance at $p < .001$, refers to the practice of burying or refusing to bury suicides. It is significant to note that those who agree with the Church have refused eleven (11) persons burial; while the men who disagree with the position of the Church and show greater sympathy have not refused (0) anyone a Christian burial. Those who are less sympathetic toward suicide have also granted on the average a greater number of partial burial services; more full burial services; more full burial services and more confessional absolution to attempted suicides than have been offered by those who have reflected greater sympathy toward suicide.

From the responses made to this particular item, the more conservative priests reflected a greater statistical sensitivity than did the more liberal Church representatives because they were more precise in their

⁴Ibid.

response. The more liberal clergymen quite frequently remarked with terms such as "never" to part (a), and "all" to part (c) and (d) of this item.

It would appear that the lower average number per respondent, concerning the number of partial burials, full burials and confessional absolution of the clergymen, as opposed to the higher average number per respondent for the liberals, may be explained by the fact that the liberals are more sympathetic toward suicide and have enjoyed a greater degree of success in their counseling with suicides, thereby dissuading many from actually taking their lives. Note the higher exposure of the more liberal in Item A, Number 1, part (a), as opposed to their lower number of burials in part (b) and (c) of Item A, Number 2. The lower degree of confessional absolution by those who agree (see part (d) of Item A, Number 2) could be attributed to the fact that the more liberal priests viewed this as a socio-psychological problem and treated it as such, thus did not employ the confessional as a necessary resource.

Some of the priests related that their refusal to bury was decided by their superiors. The more liberal clergy explained the partial burial service as a fear because scandal would have been created had they performed full burial rites. They too were given directives as to what type of service would be rendered the remains of a

suicide. One stated that he was once directed to merely bless the casket while it was still within the funeral coach. This simple blessing while reciting a very brief prayer represented the Church's disdain for the remains of the deceased suicide.

Another priest explained that it was his feeling that the people "will not buy this eternal damnation bit anymore." He stated that he would bury all suicides on the basis of Christ's request for love, charity, and brotherhood. He would, in all cases, invoke the clause of a suicide's irrationality and deny no one the right to be buried in accordance with the directives for regular burial.

One of the priests who had refused burial services cited a case which illustrates his agreement with the position of the Church. He had in his parish a relatively young man who was a lawyer by profession. The man was seeking answers to his many questions pertaining to the Roman Catholic faith. He professed a strong sense of justice and vehemently defended his position that no man had the right to ask God's assistance at the obvious end to his life. He refused to accept the sacraments because he felt this was tantamount to entreating God's help. In this man's present rationality and strong defense of his seemingly defiant stance, the priest stated that should this man commit suicide without any obviously extenuating

circumstances he would refuse him burial. At the insistence of relatives and friends, the most that he could grant would be partial burial rites.

Even though individuals do seem rational and have manifested knowledge and deliberation in planning their own destruction, it seems clear that the clergyman who possesses a modicum of understanding of the motivations involved in a suicidal attempt would bend every effort so as not to invoke the canon law.

Farberow and Shneidman, of the Suicide Prevention Center, Los Angeles, state that their research has encouraged them in their work with suicides.⁵ The feasibility of preventing suicide is factual. They have found that more individuals who are acutely suicidal are in such a state for a relatively short period of time. During the period of crisis they are extremely ambivalent about living and dying.

If the techniques for identifying these individuals, before rash acts are taken, can be disseminated and if there are agencies, like the Suicide Prevention Center in the community that can throw resources in on the side of life and give the individual some temporary surcease or sanctuary, then after a short time most individuals can go on, voluntarily and willingly, to live useful and creative lives.⁶

⁵ Edwin S. Shneidman and Norman L. Farberow, "A Report of Public Service Feasibilities" (Unpublished mimeographed material), p. 4.

⁶ Ibid.

Item A, Number 3, part (a) has a level of significance of $p < .001$. In answer to the question, "I would give full burial rites of my Church to a rational individual who has committed suicide," the conservative churchman would answer firmly, "No." This is the teaching of the Church discipline as stated clearly in Canon No. 1240. This statement was used to determine the two factions used in this study. Those who agreed were placed in the category of the liberal or of those who disagreed with the Church's clearly-stated position. Those who answered in the negative were put into the classification of agreement with the Church discipline.

There was a high percentage of liberals who either disagreed with the Church or who were uncertain on this point. The decision, or indecision, which prevailed may be due to the attitude that a person who commits suicide does so of socio-economic and/or socio-psychological phenomena. All persons who commit suicide, ipso facto, are emotionally disturbed and for that reason, even though they seem to be rational, are in some way irrational. When confronted with the possibility of a rational person taking his own life the liberal clergymen who were interviewed immediately responded, "If that be the case then I let God be judge of this person. I will not deny any man his right to a Christian burial. The burial service is

not a sacrament for it neither saves nor condemns. Using this logic I feel no compunctions or wrong doing in the eyes of the Church."

The use of the insanity clause is recounted by Fedden in his book, Suicide.⁷ Although the historical position of the early Church showed disregard for suicide, it emphasized the humility and the abject nature of unregenerated man.⁸ Later, adhering to Plato's objection to suicide, the converts to Christianity began to view the suicide as a robber of God, a person who willfully destroyed divine property.

The early Christians apparently accepted the prevailing attitudes of their time on suicide, particularly when persecution made life unbearable for them. The Apostles did not denounce suicide; the New Testament touched on the question only indirectly, and for several centuries the leaders of the Church did not condemn the practice, which apparently was rather common.⁹

Despite the fact that the Venerable Bede, during the first half of the eighth century, had come forth with a reaffirmation of the theory of the self-inflicted nature of Christ's crucifixion, the atmosphere toward suicide had not changed.¹⁰

⁷Henry R. Fedden, Suicide - A Social and Historical Study (London: P. Davies, 1938), pp. 143-144.

⁸Ibid., p. 109.

⁹Louis Dublin, Suicide: A Sociological and Statistical Study (New York: Ronald Press, 1963), p. 118.

¹⁰Fedden, op. cit., p. 143.

The appearance of the Penitentials in 829 A.D. brought about the "If clause" in regards to burial prohibitions of suicides. Masses could now be said for insane suicides and prayers for those who had committed the act of self-destruction through the vexation of the devil.¹¹

It is most interesting to note the appearance of the now familiar insanity excuse. This, ever since, has been the subterfuge of the forces of intelligence in their attempts to modify suicide legislation without causing an open breach with popular prejudice.¹²

Item A, Number 4 is significant at $0.1 < p > 0.05$. This statement was answered negatively by all those who agreed with the Church. This item inquired as to whether the respondent would accept or question the statement that the Church encourages suicide because historically it speaks glowingly of an afterlife and has often been pessimistic about the world which would, in essence, indict the Church.

Those who disagree with the church's position would reflect limited doubt. Most liberals were in agreement with the more conservative clergy. When inquiring why there would be doubt and uncertainty, one of the interviewees stated that he had counseled a few persons who had unreservedly accepted an all-loving and all-forgiving environment near God so that heaven was certainly more

¹¹Ibid., p. 144.

¹²Ibid.

desired than this existence. Obsessed with this thought of "Gloryland," they felt that life was not worth living. They had decided blithely to go on to their reward.

However, most clergymen would agree that the outlook of the Church is one that frowns upon suicide. Suicide, to the Church, is one of the few sins for which there is no escape from eternal punishment. By its nature, it prevents any opportunities for repentance and places the soul in everlasting danger.¹³

The remarks of a professor from the University of Rome, Italy, Franco Ferracuti, casts a light of understanding upon the Roman Catholic conception of the aforementioned problem.

. . . The entire outlook of the Church is toward life, which must be lived in order to reach a more perfect life. This life-centered philosophy probably has an important connection with the deterrent effect of Catholicism upon suicide. There is no possibility for the Catholic to rationalize suicide, except in a delirious way. When a truly Catholic person contemplates or commits suicide, he either is mentally sick or has given up religion. There are some instances in which belief in the hereafter does facilitate suicide in a Catholic person, but careful analysis of such cases almost always reveals the presence of serious insanity and delirium.¹⁴

Item A, Number 5 has a level of significance at .02 < p > .01. Approximately one-half the number of priests who are sympathetic to suicides (16) agreed, as compared

¹³ Shneidman, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁴ Ibid.

to the number of more conservatives (31), who also agreed with the proposition that a strong Church pronouncement against suicide deters parishioners from taking their lives.

The interviews revealed that the conservatives thought that most Christians would reconsider the threat of eternal damnation. One priest from Ireland in particular remarked, "The old Irish would be horrified to think that they would not be buried by the Church. It would mean the same as being consigned directly to hell."

The attitude of the liberal was reflected by a priest who flatly denied that a strong pronouncement helped at all. His experience has been that a strong statement does nothing to deter a person contemplating suicide. Morality by edict was totally unacceptable to him. The person must be awakened to the need for new and Christ-centered goals and motivated toward their attainment. Coercion by proclamation and fear does not fit into today's mentality and understanding of the Church.

The uncertain felt that the Church should have a strong pronouncement but their experience has proved that the act of suicide is not influenced by any type of Church statement when the person is emotionally disturbed and under continuing stress. Although many parishioners are ignorant of Roman Catholic theology and canon law, there are those who accept the fact that the commandment

declares, "Thou shalt not kill." and knowledge of this may have a deterring effect upon the believer.

If suicide is pre-eminently the desperate act of one who does not care to live;¹⁵ if it's causes are outside rather than within one; and if these causes are effective only when one ventures into their sphere of activity,¹⁶ as Durkheim indicates, then is man able to make a free personal choice? Those clergymen who expressed doubt or disagreed would tend to accept this concept as a possibility which in turn would influence, if not negate, the effectiveness of the Church's prohibitive pronouncements.

The suicides are sometimes encouraged toward committing self-destructive acts because of their particular interpretation of the position held by the Church. As stated by Litman and Farberow, the most serious suicidal potential is associated with feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, exhaustion, failure and the feeling, "I just want out."¹⁷ Knowing clearly the traditional position of the Church on suicide, some parishioners who have

¹⁵Emile Durkheim, Suicide: A Study in Sociology (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 44.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁷Norman L. Farberow and Edwin S. Shneidman, The Cry for Help (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 53.

seriously contemplated harming themselves feel they have, through ideation or attempt, cut themselves from the supportive moorings of the Church. This failure to live according to the prescribed faith can be construed as a forfeiture of help and hope.

Although most priests who were interviewed agreed that from their experience the strong pronouncement of the Church does tend to deter those who have not become overwhelmed by emotional upheaval, they also expressed the feeling that the more disturbed cases could not be reached on a religious basis. The power of God's forgiveness had become neutralized and religion seemed to fan the fire of self-destruction and the need for punishment.

A case study of a walk-in at the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center may illustrate further this attitude of the more liberal priest. The counselee was a twenty-three year old Caucasian, single, skilled worker and a member of the Roman Catholic Church. He had been released recently following a one-week hospitalization for a serious barbituate suicide attempt. He was a practicing, monogamous homosexual who had lost his mate, and consequently was thrown into a deep state of depression. The position of the Church on homosexuality and suicide caused him to accept the fact that he "was a two-time loser." Giving in to the suicidal wishes was not difficult, for he already felt alienated due to his way of

life and decided to end it.

Item B, Number 1 has a level of significance at $.1 < p > .05$. On this question many more liberal respondents showed uncertainty and less agreement (50%) than the more conservative priests (30%). The more liberal clergy who were interviewed doubted seriously whether the killing of oneself would injure the community of man of which one is a part, which was the item in point. Case studies were cited wherein they had attempted to help the suicide-prone person gain a healthier respect for life. The priest had found helplessness and hopelessness deeply rooted within the suicide due to the long years of habitual dissipation during the period when one's life should be most fruitful and productive. Following the verbal admission of the suicide, it was the priest's opinion that the act of suicide actually removed an unhealthy, harmful example and parasitic influence from the community.

The conservative clergy agreed with St. Thomas Aquinas who in his Summa Theologica states that it is altogether unlawful to kill oneself, citing as reasons the first three statements of item B of the questionnaire. Both natural and divine law are one in condemning suicide as a fault against the person, against society and against God. This portion, B Number 1 is refuted by Aquinas who

states that every part of the community, as such, he belongs to the community. Hence by destroying himself he injures the community.¹⁸ His position was formulated following the influence of St. Augustine who in The City of God states:

. . . since in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill," there is no limitation added nor any exception made in favor of anyone, and least of all in favor of him on whom the command is laid The commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill man"; therefore neither another nor yourself, for he who kills himself still kills nothing else than man.¹⁹

The more conservative felt that since God, the Creator, has gifted man with reason and awareness, man has the responsibility to know His divine wishes and strive to fulfill them. He must use his faith to cope with life reflecting strength and courage, thus setting the desired example for his fellowman who also lives under stress in the community of men.

As Kenneth M. Kunert, S. J. has cited in his paper, "Suicide and The Catholic Church":

In the teaching of the Catholic Church suicide is a mortal sin against the fifth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Hence a person who wilfully, directly and with full knowledge kills himself, would be punished in hell for all eternity unless that person would have a chance to repent before the effect of the suicidal

¹⁸Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947),

¹⁹Augustine, City of God (New York: Modern Library, 1950), (1:20), p. 26.

action, the direct attempt on his life, took effect. The sinfulness of this act arises from the fact that man is directly interfering with God's plan and providence for him and rejecting the duties which he has to perform in the world for the fulfilling of God's providence.²⁰

Item B, Number 2 has a level of significance at $.1 < p > .05$. This statement, that suicide is a sin because it assumes the prerogative of God who alone has the right to give life and take it away, was challenged by the more liberal clergy who were uncertain and disagreed (12%) as opposed to the conservatives who did not disagree but were uncertain (2%). Those who were interviewed almost unanimously agreed with St. Thomas, accepting the traditional notion that it is God alone who has the prerogative to take away life. They felt that in committing suicide man wrongly claims self-ownership. This is false, they commented, for God has given life to man, affording him the opportunity to work out his salvation while giving worship to the Author of all creation. Some of the liberals expressed concern about the validity of using the word sin, but they could not deny the truth of this traditional belief.

One of the clergymen, who disagreed with the Church position, expressed strong objection to the word sin. He

²⁰Kenneth M. Kunert, S. J., "Suicide and the Catholic Church" (Unpublished mimeographed material), p. 1.

felt that man's will would have to be less than free if he would ultimately succumb to the wish to end it all and take his own life. To him, sin lies in the will and not necessarily in the action taken by the suicidal. It must be a deliberate and voluntary act.

Support was found for his position in the New Catholic Encyclopedia which defines sin as a human act, and precisely as such requires the exercise of both intellect and will. When this is lacking a man's act is amoral and cannot be described as human or virtuous, or vicious or sinful.²¹

This clergyman went on to state that wrong is not necessarily a sin but that unique circumstances must also be considered before determining the wrongfulness and rightfulness of a given act. God certainly gave man free will, but the person's choice in the exercise of free will may be so influenced by outside pressures and stresses that herein the final decision is made by God, not man nor the Church. He believed firmly that God would not label the act a sin, which would be carried through all eternity, but would forgive this person as not being a rational being nor a free agent with the powers of selective activity. Further illumination given by the New

²¹"Sin," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), XIII, 241.

Catholic Encyclopedia states:

The formal constitutive of sin . . . includes not merely what is done (the *finis operis*), but also the sinner's purpose in doing it (the *finis operantis*), as well as the circumstances that give a new kind of moral quality to what is done. That is not to say, however, that the motive or the circumstances change the moral character of what is done; blasphemy is blasphemy, and murder is murder whatever the motive. But the motive (or *finis operantis*) is itself an object of the will, and circumstances can so modify an object that it acquires a new kind of morality in addition to that which it has of itself.²²

Item B, Number 3 has a level of significance at $.01 < p < .001$. The conservatives again agreed with the statement of St. Thomas Aquinas. Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents who agreed with the Church position agreed that suicide is a sin because every man should love himself and therefore suicide is contrary to natural law and love, which is the context of this item. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the liberals were uncertain or disagreed with this statement.

The conservatives agreed with the position stated by Aquinas that by nature man seeks his good and the essential good that man has is his being.

It is altogether unlawful to kill oneself . . . because everything naturally loves itself, the result being that everything naturally keeps itself in being, and resists corruptions so far as it can. Wherefore suicide is contrary to the inclination of nature, and

²²Ibid., p. 243.

to charity whereby every man should love himself. Hence suicide is always a mortal sin, as being contrary to the natural law and to charity.²³

Direct suicide, therefore, is never justifiable, because the law of nature instills within us the command to care for our lives and inspires us with the horror of this crime.²⁴ The moral theologians cite two cases wherein suicide seems to have been committed, and yet the Church has not condemned it. The early martyrs, in some cases, placed themselves in such positions that the civil authorities had to kill them because of their fervor of faith.²⁵ As a post hoc explanation for many of these suicides the teachers of the Church put forth the assumption that these acts were committed under divine inspiration.²⁶ These martyrs as well as the women who desired to retain their chastity, who did not consider their impending suicide as an act of divine inspiration, committed morally condemnable acts of suicide. Another excusing factor would be the inability to act as morally free agents, because of their delusion one is never

²³ Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., p. 1469.

²⁴ J. Berthier, and Sidney A. Raemers, A Compendium of Theology (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1933), III, 300.

²⁵ Fedden, op. cit., pp. 119-124.

²⁶ Berthier, op. cit., III, 300.

permitted to do anything that is certain to result in self-destruction, with or without the intention of inviting death. An exception to that statement would be for a proportionate reason, such as the common good during a period of religious persecution, the duty of a soldier to defend his country, or the commandment that the shepherd should defend his flock and lay down his life for the love of his brother.²⁷

The second case wherein suicide may be justified is when a person justly condemned to death by civil authority serves as his own executioner. The case of Socrates demonstrates this problem. The common opinion of moralists is opposed to this, although they state that no one is bound to take his own life, as is the person condemned to die of starvation bound to take the food secretly brought to him.²⁸

There is another consideration involved in the principle of "double effect" in regard to the possibility of death due to a person's initiated actions. A soldier is bound to set fire to an enemy fortress even though he himself will certainly perish in the flames, or a person leaping from a high building to avoid dying by fire. In essence it can be stated that it is morally right to intend a good which ultimately may result in death. The

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

person, however, must have a sufficient and just reason for initiating the act, and his reason must be commensurate with the negative results which may be foreseen and permitted, though not intended.²⁹

The exercising of extraordinary means to continue one's life is another issue discussed by the moral theologians. The example of one destined to live a hopeless, vegetable-like existence, waiting death by cancer, refusing to accept intravenous feeding or any medication which would prolong his agony. Although this refusal will hasten his death the good effect is to avoid increased expense and extended family grief.

Item B, Number 5 has a level of significance at $p < .001$. This item states that suicide is not a sin because the forces which are responsible for it are of a socio-psychological nature which are not always capable of being controlled by the individual, thereby absolving him of guilt. This item was rejected by sixty-six percent (66%) of the conservative clergy while fifty percent (50%) of the liberals were uncertain and thirty percent (30%) agreed.

The majority of all the men interviewed reflected uncertainty. They cited the teaching of the Church that

²⁹Kunert, op. cit., p. 6.

the person who commits a human act of sin must do so with knowledge of intent and unfettered freedom of the will. There is always that probability that the act of suicide is committed involuntarily through socio-psychological and even physical pressures which deny the person the voluntary consent that comprises sin. Can we say the act is sinful when full knowledge and full consent are absent?

One of the priests related a case wherein a nun was plagued by a tremendous sex drive. It had become virtually uncontrollable and the embarrassment was so great that she was on the verge of committing self-destruction in order to terminate this upheaval. Fortunately, the counselor was a priest who possessed some medical knowledge. Following his evaluation, he referred her to a medical doctor who found the nun to be suffering from a pronounced imbalance of hormones. When this condition was brought under control, the symptoms of her abnormal sex impulses disappeared.

Another interviewee reported the incidence of mental and neurological disorder in a counselee who happened to be a medical secretary. Her employer had given her vitamin pills whose side effect made her exceedingly hyperactive. She couldn't relax; her sleep was restless, and she had become so irritable that suicide was seriously contemplated. When questioning her about the period

previous to the onset of her hyperactive feelings, the only change in her routine and activity was the prescribed vitamin intake. When this was curtailed the suicidal ideation also stopped. Moral theology does consider the many and varied impediments which would in turn minimize the culpability and imputability of a person's suicidal act.³⁰

A socio-cultural influence may be brought into clearer focus by using the example of the Japanese where suicide has been imbedded in national tradition. Although hara-kiri is prohibited by law since 1868, it continues to occur among those who seek to avoid public disgrace. It has been estimated that no less than one thousand and five hundred such suicides have taken place each year and about half of these were entirely voluntary.³¹

According to an authority on suicide in Japan, Professor Ayanori Okasaki, today's high suicidal rates in Japan have resulted from the breakdown in the country's social system. Before the war there prevailed a patriarchal family system with strong family ties. Now the youth, particularly the girls, have broken away from these traditional disciplines, creating disunity and lack of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Dublin, op. cit., p. 99.

familial harmony and giving rise to the incidence of suicide.³²

James Hillman in his book, Suicide and the Soul, states:

Because the individual is enmeshed in the suicidal tendency of a group owing to which suicide results, the act as such cannot be moral or immoral. No personal choice is involved. Suicide is rather a sociological problem, telling us something about the condition of a society. For sociology, this condition is always negative. Suicide represents a loosening of the social structure, a weakening of group bonds, a disintegration.³³

The paradox of acceptance and rejection of suicide within various cultures and religions continues to confound the scholars, both within the Church and outside the Church. The image presented in the Western world is that Christian theology, as found in Roman Catholicism, attributed to the teachings of Saints Augustine and Aquinas, is overly dogmatic and too authoritative. However, her strong pronouncements and burial prohibitions are not unique nor does she possess a monopoly. The Orthodox Church of Greece reiterated the early church proclamations by citing the encyclicals of March 27 and October 23, 1900. This incited scholars to point out that suicide not infrequently presupposes emotional

³² Ibid., p. 100.

³³ James Hillman, Suicide and the Soul (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 26.

disturbance; that the burial prohibitions unjustly penalize the relatives and friends of the suicide; that the Church buries the greatest of wrongdoers and those who have indirectly committed suicide, persons who have committed more serious wrongs than the individual who may commit direct suicide.³⁴

Fundamental protestantism is also represented in this category of ecclesiastical opposition to suicide. The American Council of Christian Churches has passed a resolution condemning the Anglican position which supported the repeal of the British laws on suicide (1961):

Death by suicide ends all opportunity for repentance. Almighty God created life. It is His. Murder, including self-murder, is a transgression of His law.³⁵

The more conservative clergy would agree with the above statement. They reflect a fear of absolving man of his responsibility to God and His law. It was commented that if man is excused from his culpability by using general socio-psychological reasoning, he will continually fail to develop greater concern for others, or responsibility to others and thus avoid developing his conscience. The conservative asks why others survive without resorting to suicide although they all live ostensibly under similar

³⁴"Suicide," The Great Greek Encyclopedia (Athens: Phenoix, 1928), VI, 275.

³⁵Hillman, op. cit., p. 31.

social conditions and pressures? In our liberal approach to serious moral issues, are we not denying man the exercise needed to maintain necessary principles? This is a question that the conservatives raised.

Item B, Number 6 has a level of significance at $.1 < p < .05$. It is deemed important to note that previous items pertaining to the same theological context revealed approximately the same degree of significance, i.e., Item B, Numbers 1 and 2. This would then appear to validate the questionnaire.

The greater number of liberal (58%) and conservatives (76%) both disagreed with this statement in the questionnaire (there are situations in which God may actually grant man the courage to destroy himself, so that he cannot be regarded as a suicide in a bad sense). Most of the priests interviewed revealed either uncertainty or disagreement with this statement.

A hospital chaplain reported his attempt to counsel an elderly man on the ward who had recently lost his wife. Being without children or relatives and destined to spend the remaining years of his life in a hospital bed, his future was bleak, and to become a burden on others was totally unacceptable to him. With resolution he mentioned to the chaplain that he truly believed God would not only forgive him, but would give him the courage to do what he

felt he must. Before the week ended he was dead. There was no outward act of violence committed, but something within hastened his death. The desire to die seemed to overwhelm and stop the natural forces of life.

Under extraordinary circumstances wherein sickness, military duty, protection of one's faith or chastity, etc., are of serious consequence, consideration may be given to the moral of "double effect." Some suicides feel that God does give them the courage to commit the act when their reasoning fails to provide them with an alternative. This statement is supported by Kunert who maintains that it is permissible to set in motion a possible cause of one's death if that cause is not a wrong act, and if it has another effect as immediate as death itself, and if such an effect is important enough to justify death.³⁶

A conservative clergyman disagreed with this statement, because it was contrary to what he believed to be the extent of God's intervention in one's life. He firmly believed that God would not allow anything purposely to enter one's life which was contrary to His laws of nature. God would grant a man courage to express heroism, saving the lives of others yet losing his own, but this could not be considered suicide as intended in

³⁶Kunert, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

the statement. God does grant man the courage to make a positive choice despite the fact that the choice will result in a "negative" reaction.

Another priest who agreed with the position of the Church felt that courage was not necessary to take one's own life. The needed ingredient was insanity or some type of duress. He cited further the phenomenon of epidemic suicides which tend to follow the untimely death of a political idol or popular movie stars. When this happens it is an example of weakness and/or sickness, not courage. The act of heroism as expressed by a mother who throws herself in front of her child to protect it from being killed cannot be categorized as a suicide. One may be endangering his life, but he is not taking it by his own hand.

Of the conservatives only three (3) agreed with this item. They seemingly felt compelled to defend the Church and her position against suicide. St. Augustine entreats us to be cautious not to follow blindly the example of some martyrs.

When God enjoins any act, and intimates by plain evidence that He has enjoined it, who will call obedience criminal? . . . He, then, who knows it is unlawful to kill himself, may nevertheless do so if he is ordered by Him whose commands we may not neglect. Only let him be very sure that the divine command has been signified. As for us, we can become privy to the secrets of conscience only in so far as

these are disclosed to us, and so far only do we judge: "no one knoweth the things of a man which is in him." (I Cor. 2:11)³⁷

The writer agrees with Kunert when he expresses the need for distinction in regard to sinful acts. Since suicide is designated as a sinful act, the discerning observer should be sensitive to the objectivity and subjectivity of the act. It is sinful objectively, if by its very nature it is found to be incongruous with the natural laws or the laws of God. It is sinful subjectively, if the individual is aware of its evil and commits it anyway. An objectively sinful act may not be subjectively sinful if the individual manifests ignorance or limited freedom. It then follows that an objectively good act may be subjectively sinful, if the person perceives it to be wrong, as contrary to his conscience, yet does it anyway.³⁸

Of the more liberal respondents, forty-two percent (42%) agreed with Item B, Number 6 or were uncertain. There seemed to be a tendency to question the sinfulness of suicide and the position of the Church with her serious sanctions placed against the committing of this sin. They cannot but recall the names of the many saints, holy women and men who engaged in self-destruction because an enemy had sinned or was going to sin against them. Then too,

³⁷ Augustine, op. cit., p. 31

³⁸ Kunert, op. cit., p. 10.

the varied psychological symptoms of the sufferer are conceived as being the result of chronic emotional problems or the confusion of crises.

Item C, Number 2 has a level of significance of $p < .001$. The liberal clergymen who manifest a more sympathetic attitude toward the suicide have made a significantly greater number of referrals outside the Church; whereas the more conservative, in comparison to the liberal, made a greater number of referrals within the Church. It would appear that this is reflective of the liberal thinking that because suicide is a socio-psychological phenomenon it ought to be treated by someone psychologically-oriented and not necessarily by the man of religion.

The interviews revealed that many of the clergy were totally unfamiliar with the local agencies available for crises counseling or immediate, psychiatric-referral information. They depended largely upon private physicians or the hospitalization available at the psychiatric unit of the Los Angeles County General Hospital. Awareness of the extensive work carried on by the various agencies functioning in the area of suicide prevention was minimal. This could be a more valid reason for the lack of referrals outside the Church and not attributed to any religious prejudice or protectiveness.

B. NON-DISTINGUISHING ITEMS

Despite the fact that much of the material within the questionnaire proved to be statistically insignificant it is possible to gain valuable information from the probable reasons for this particular phenomenon, i.e., these items are significant in that they do not distinguish between the liberal and conservative groups.

Item 3 of the Personal Data section of the questionnaire has a level of significance at $0.5 < p > 0.3$. There was a seven percent (7%) difference between the liberals and conservatives among those born abroad who disagree more with the Church than those born in the United States. Apparently the place of one's birth does not significantly affect one's attitude toward suicide; but the type of educational background and other experiences may.

Item 4 has a level of significance at $0.9 < p > 0.8$. It does not appear that age is a significant factor in explaining different positions of the clergy with regard to suicide. It would appear that the educational background and other personal experiences of the clergy might indicate possible reasons for their agreement or disagreement with the Church.

Item 6 indicated that the years of education in college, seminary or graduate school do not reflect any pronounced influence upon the priest's thinking with regard to suicide and the Church. Apparently it is the type of education which one received and not the years or quantity which is important. The level of significance for each type of learning is as follows:

College	$0.7 < p > 0.5$
Seminary	$0.8 < p > 0.7$
Graduate Study	$0.5 < p > 0.3$

Item 7 has a level of significance at $0.7 < p > 0.5$. The area in which the clergyman received the major portion of his education did not show a decided influence upon his liberalism or conservatism.

Item 8 has a level of significance at $0.2 < p > 0.1$. Apparently the liberal and conservative priests do not tend to be differentiated by their socio-economic background. Perhaps it is a type of personal experience which they may have had which is of importance in creating an attitude toward suicide.

Item 9 has a level of significance at $0.7 < p > 0.5$. The rural or urban aspect of the priest's formative years do not appear to be of significance in the development of one's attitude toward suicide. Again, it would appear that other factors are of importance in generating an

attitude toward suicide, e.g., type of education, training and personal experience.

In regard to Item 10, the years of service and the type of ministry did not reveal statistical significance with regard to the priest's position concerning suicide. The statistical ratings of their services are as follows:

Ministry	0.9 < p > 0.8
Education	0.2 < p > 0.1
Administration	0.2 < p > 0.1
Parish	0.5 < p > 0.3

This lack of significance could be explained by recognizing that it is the man and what he brings to the position and not the position in and of itself.

The following are the levels of significance determined for Item 11 and are beyond those limits that have herein been designated as statistically significant:

Clinical Training	0.3 < p > 0.2
Chaplain	p > 0.99
General Hospital	0.5 < p > 0.3
Penal Institution	0.2 < p > 0.1
Mental Institution	0.3 < p > 0.2

That reasoning which had been applied to the previous item, Item 10, could very well explain the lack of significance in this item.

The levels of significance of Item A, Number 3 (Practice and Beliefs) are:

3 (b)	0.3 < p > 0.2
3 (c)	p = 0.98
3 (d)	0.2 < p > 0.1

As was reported previously this item of the questionnaire was used to determine the liberal or conservatism of each respondent to the questionnaire. The item is as follows: I would give the full burial rites of my church to

- b) a mentally unbalanced individual who has committed suicide.
- c) someone who has expressed repentance after an attempted suicide.
- d) someone who has committed suicide where there is some doubt as to the rationality of the individual.

It is noteworthy that, from a percentage standpoint, the more conservative clergymen were more consistent with the position of the Church as stipulated in Canon 1240, and reflected greater confidence in their answers. The more liberal clergymen indicated a greater degree of uncertainty even though the position of the Church manifested a more sympathetic attitude to the suicide where there was doubt about the suicide's rationality at the time of his self-destruction. However, both groups agreed unanimously to Number 3 (c) of this item to give full burial rites to those who expressed repentance. This could be reflective of a sympathy toward suicide which both groups felt free to express without contradicting the Church. The more liberal clergy manifested no such reservation with regard to other items of the questionnaire.

Item B, Number 4 has a level of significance at $0.7 < p > 0.5$. The interviews revealed a greater uncertainty concerning the theme of this item which is concerned with whether or not suicide is a forgivable sin when one recognizes that God judges the content of the last hour in the context of the whole. The conservative stated that if a righteous man may be in the wrong momentarily by the act of suicide at the last, then it was questionable whether the man was truly righteous. A deliberate act would cancel out his being righteous and if it were a rational act then it would be an unforgivable sin. The more liberal priest felt that God does judge man in terms of his entire life and not on the one moment. He went on to say that the person's unique circumstances and limited free will is known to God and His forgiveness or judgment will be made manifest. The true condition of man's psyche will aid him in achieving eternal forgiveness despite the fact that the individual's choice, with his power to choose self-destruction, is respected by God.

St. Thomas Aquinas has an enlightening reply to this in his Summa Theologica:

Man is made master of himself through his free will: Wherefore he can lawfully dispose of himself as to those matters which pertain to this life which is ruled by man's free will. But the passage from this life to another and happier one is subject not to man's free will but to the power of God. Hence it is not lawful for man to take his own life that he may

pass to a happier life, not that he may escape any unhappiness whatsoever of the present life, because the ultimate and most fearsome evil of this life is death.³⁹

Item B, Number 7 has a level of significance at $0.9 < p > 0.8$. Both the conservative and liberal groups disagreed with the notion that suicide is not a sin because the Bible nowhere explicitly states this. As indicated throughout the questionnaire both groups recognize that suicide can be considered a sin but to the liberal it is more generally accepted as being a wrongful act and not a sin because of man's circumstance, and his guilt is diminished because of his restricted advertence and limited freedom. The conservative however, tends to support the position of the Church stating that suicide is a violation of canon law and is more reluctant to accept most statements which begin with the phrase "suicide is not a sin . . . ". The findings reflect that wherever the statement is phrased in this positive manner in favor of suicide there is a heavy response in the categories of uncertain and disagree.

Item C, Number 1 has a level of significance at $0.95 < p > 0.90$. It is of noteworthy interest that both groups evaluate their personal competence in dealing with

³⁹Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., p. 1469.

suicides to be of the same degree. Apparently the differing viewpoints of these two groups do not influence the measure of the degree of personal self-sufficiency as seen by the individual involved in a counseling relationship.

Item C, Number 3 has a level of significance at $0.7 < p > 0.5$. With regard to the knowledge of the respondent of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center, it appears that it is not a significant factor in evaluating the degree of one's sympathetic attitude toward suicide or the suicide.

One of the interviewees reflected a negative description of his experiences with the Suicide Prevention Center. Upon further questioning he had never had contact with the regular staff but would place his calls between the hours of twelve to four a.m., at the time of his confrontation with a crisis. The response of "call back on Monday morning for referral" did not satisfy his immediate needs for resources so as to materially assist the person in crisis.

Items 1 and 2 of "Parish Characteristics" do not appear to indicate that one develops a more or less sympathetic attitude toward suicide either because of the socio-economic level of his parishioners nor the locale of the Church, rural or urban. This insignificance could be

explained by the view that it is the man and what he brings to the situation which is of importance, and not necessarily the situational aspect, in and of itself.

The statistical calculations are as follows:

- 1) $0.8 < p > 0.9$
- 2) $0.7 < p > 0.5$

Item 3 has a level of significance at $0.5 < p > 0.3$.

It would appear that the size of the parish which is served by the priest does not significantly affect his thinking concerning suicide.

Item 4 has a level of significance at $0.5 < p > 0.3$.

Again it could be said that one's attitude toward suicide is not significantly affected by racial composition of one's parish. The attitudes of the priest may change due to his experience in a particular type parish; but in the main, it is he who can affect the parish through his background and education.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

A questionnaire was developed and mailed to four hundred (400) Roman Catholic clergymen of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, who were randomly chosen from the total N of 1200, and an additional seventy-five (75) were mailed to Eastern Orthodox clergy throughout the United States. The Orthodox concur with the canonical position of the Roman Church, in accordance with Canon 1240, which states that those who have committed suicide are to be denied the burial rites of the Church. However, if the deceased is found to have destroyed himself because of his irrationality the Church then affords the remains the usual burial services and honors. Whenever doubt becomes an issue the decision is to be made in favor of the suicide. (See page 28.)

Item A, Number 3 of "Practice and Beliefs" (see Appendix A) was used as a criterion in determining which respondents were in agreement (conservatives) with the Church position on suicide or which were in disagreement (liberals) with the canon law of the Church. Their responses, discussed in the previous chapter, are herein summarized in tabular form on the following pages.

PERSONAL DATA

3.** Birth

- a. U.S.A.
- b. Abroad

Agree No.	%	Disagree No.	%	Chi Square*
32	63	28	56	----
19	37	22	44	0.5<p>0.3

4. Age

- a. 30-34
- b. 35-39
- c. 40-44
- d. 45-49
- e. 50-54
- f. 55-59
- g. 60-64
- h. 65+

8	16	11	22	----
8	16	7	14	----
6	12	3	6	----
4	8	5	10	----
6	12	6	12	----
8	16	8	16	----
6	12	5	10	----
5	10	5	10	0.9<p>0.8

6. Educational Background

- a. College or University (Years)
 - 1 year
 - 2 years
 - 3 years
 - 4 years
 - 4+ years

0	0	0	0	----
3	3	3	3	----
4	4	2	2	----
15	17	11	13	----
2	2	8	9	0.7<p>0.5

*For the purposes of this study the Chi Square is held to be significant when $0.1 < p < 0.001$ and the value herein reported is that for the level of significance, not the Chi Square.

**Numbering sequence is that of the questionnaire (See Appendix A).

	Agree		Disagree		Chi Square*
	No.	%	No.	%	
b. Seminary (Years)					
5 years	12	13	10	12	----
6 years	15	17	11	13	----
7 years	4	4	4	5	----
8 years	5	6	6	7	----
9 years	4	4	0	0	----
10 years	3	3	2	2	----
11 years	1	1	2	2	----
12 years	7	8	10	12	0.8<p>0.7
c. Graduate Study (Years)					
1 year	5	6	11	13	----
2 years	5	6	3	3	----
3 years	1	1	1	1	----
4 years	4	4	2	2	0.5<p>0.3
7. The major portion of my education was received in the following area of the United States:					
a. Northeast	7	12	5	9	----
b. South	0	0	0	0	----
c. Midwest	6	11	10	17	----
d. West	25	45	21	37	----
e. Abroad	18	32	21	37	0.7<p>0.5
8. Socio-economic level of my family background:					
a. Upper	2	4	3	6	----
b. Middle	42	84	35	72	----
c. Lower	6	12	11	22	0.2<p>0.1

	Agree		Disagree		Chi Square*
	No.	%	No.	%	
9. The place of residence during my formative years (1-16 years of age):					
a. Essentially urban	35	69	32	64	----
b. Essentially rural	16	31	18	36	0.7<p>0.5
10. The years of service in my ministry are as follows:					
a. Ministry (total years)					
1-4 years	9	18	13	27	----
5-9 years	10	20	6	12	----
10-14 years	4	8	7	15	----
15-19 years	4	8	4	8	----
20-24 years	3	6	6	12	----
25-29 years	7	14	3	6	----
30-34 years	7	14	3	6	----
35-39 years	6	12	0	0	----
40+ years	0	0	6	12	0.9<p>0.8
b. Parish (years)					
1-4 years	14	16	13	19	----
5-9 years	9	10	10	14	----
10-14 years	4	5	7	10	----
15-19 years	3	4	3	4	----
20-24 years	3	4	5	7	----
25-29 years	7	8	2	3	----
30-34 years	7	8	1	1	----
35-39 years	6	7	0	0	----
40+ years	0	0	5	7	0.5<p>0.3

	Agree		Disagree		Chi Square*
	No.	%	No.	%	
c. Educational (years)					
1-4 years	8	9	10	14	----
5-9 years	3	4	3	4	----
10-14 years	1	1	2	3	----
15-19 years	2	2	0	0	----
20-24 years	2	2	0	0	----
25-29 years	0	0	0	0	----
30-34 years	0	0	0	0	----
35-39 years	2	2	0	0	----
40+ years	0	0	0	0	0.2<p>0.1
d. Administrative (years)					
1-4 years	2	2	4	6	----
5-9 years	5	6	5	7	----
10-14 years	3	4	0	0	----
15-19 years	2	2	0	0	----
20-25 years	3	4	0	0	0.2<p>0.1
11. My experience and practice:					
a. Pastoral (Clinical Training (years)					
1 year	0	0	5	50	----
2 years	2	40	1	10	----
3 years	0	0	1	10	----
4 years	3	60	3	30	0.5<p>0.2
b. Chaplaincy Experience (total years)					
1 year	3	11	1	3	----
2 years	3	11	1	3	----
3 years	6	22	1	3	----
4 years	3	11	1	3	----
4+ years	2	7	3	10	<p>0.99

	Agree		Disagree		Chi Square*
	No.	%	No.	%	
(1) General Hospital (years)					
1 year	3	11	5	17	---
2 years	3	11	4	13	---
3 years	0	0	1	3	---
4 years	0	0	0	0	---
5 years	0	0	3	10	0.5<p>0.3
(2) Penal Institution (years)					
1 year	0	0	3	10	---
2 years	1	4	0	0	---
3 years	1	4	0	0	0.2<p>0.1
(3) Mental Institution (years)					
1 year	0	0	4	13	---
2 years	0	0	2	7	---
3 years	1	4	1	3	---
4 years	0	0	0	0	---
5 years	0	0	0	0	---
6 years	0	0	0	0	---
7 years	1	4	0	0	0.3<p>0.2

ATTITUDE TOWARD SUICIDE

A. My practice and beliefs

1. How many individuals have you counseled who have

- a. Expressed suicidal thoughts
- b. Attempted suicide
- c. Later committed suicide

Agree No. %	Disagree No. %	Chi Square*
679 13.3#	806 16.1#	---
151 3.0#	298 6.0#	---
23 0.5#	38 0.8#	p<0.001

2. In your parish ministry concerning suicides how many times have you

- a. Refused to bury the suicide (no ritual)
- b. Granted a partial burial service (grave side or private)
- c. Granted full burial rites (public church service)
- d. Given confessional absolution to an attempted suicide

11 0.3#	0 0.0#	---
65 1.3#	17 0.4#	---
100 2.0#	80 1.6#	---
84 1.7#	68 1.4#	p<0.001

3. I would give the full burial rites of my Church to a

- a. Rational individual who has committed suicide.
- agree
- uncertain
- disagree

0 0	32 64	---
6 12	16 32	---
45 88	2 4	p<0.001

#Average number of incidents per respondent, not a percentage.

	Agree		Disagree		Chi Square*
	No.	%	No.	%	
b. Mentally unbalanced individual who has committed suicide.					
agree	50	98	46	92	---
uncertain	1	2	2	4	---
disagree	0	0	2	4	0.3<p>0.2
c. Someone who has expressed repentance after an attempted suicide.					
agree	51	100	50	100	---
uncertain	0	0	0	0	---
disagree	0	0	0	0	p=0.98
d. Someone who has committed suicide where there is some doubt as to the rationality of the individual.					
agree	50	98	43	86	---
uncertain	1	2	5	10	---
disagree	0	0	2	4	0.2<p>0.1
4. I believe that religion encourages suicide because historically it speaks glowingly of an afterlife and has often been pessimistic about this world.					
agree	0	0	1	2	---
uncertain	0	0	3	6	---
disagree	51	100	46	92	0.1<p>0.05

	Agree		Disagree		Chi Square*
	No.	%	No.	%	
5. I believe that a strong ecclesiastical pronouncement against suicide deters parishioners from taking their lives.					
agree	31	61	16	32	---
uncertain	10	20	15	32	---
disagree	10	20	18	36	0.02<p>0.01
B. My Theological Position About Suicide					
1. Suicide is a sin because by killing oneself, one injures the community of man of which one is a part.					
agree	35	70	25	50	---
uncertain	7	14	14	28	---
disagree	8	16	11	22	0.1<p>0.05
2. Suicide is a sin because it assumes the prerogative of God who alone has the right to give life and take it away.					
agree	49	98	44	88	---
uncertain	1	2	3	6	---
disagree	0	0	3	6	0.1<p>0.05
3. Suicide is a sin because every man should love himself and therefore suicide is contrary to natural law and to love.					
agree	45	90	33	66	---
uncertain	3	6	12	24	---
disagree	2	4	5	10	0.01<p>0.001

	Agree		Disagree		Chi Square*
	No.	%	No.	%	
4. Suicide is a forgivable sin because God judges the content of the last hour in the context of the whole. Even a righteous man may be in the wrong momentarily by the act of suicide at the last.					
agree	26	51	30	60	---
uncertain	14	27	13	26	---
disagree	11	22	7	14	0.7<p>0.5
5. Suicide is not a sin because those forces which are responsible for it are of a socio-psychological nature which are not always capable of being controlled by the individual, thereby absolving him of guilt.					
agree	5	10	15	30	---
uncertain	12	24	25	50	---
disagree	33	66	10	20	p<0.001
6. There are situations in which God may actually grant man the courage to destroy himself, so that he cannot be regarded as a suicide in the bad sense.					
agree	3	6	11	22	---
uncertain	9	18	10	20	---
disagree	37	76	29	58	0.1<p>0.05

	Agree		Disagree		Chi Square ⁺
	No.	%	No.	%	
7. Suicide is not a sin because the Bible nowhere explicitly states this.					
agree	0	0	0	0	---
uncertain	5	10	7	14	---
disagree	45	90	43	86	0.9<p>0.8

C. My Referral Practices

1. In suicidal cases					
a. I feel certain I can be of help to the suicidal individual with or without outside referral,	5	10	5	10	---
b. I feel somewhat certain,	3	6	3	6	---
c. I do not feel certain at all,	7	14	5	10	---
d. I feel the need to cooperate with professional help.	35	70	37	74	0.95<p>0.9
2. If your experience has included contact with suicidal persons, how many times did you refer suicidal persons to an agency or professional person?					
a. Outside the Church	134	2.6#	174	3.5#	---
b. Within the Church	61	1.2#	12	.2#	p<0.001
3. Were you aware of the existence of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center before receiving this questionnaire?					
Yes	28	56	26	53	---
No	22	44	23	47	0.7<p>0.5

PARISH CHARACTERISTICS

How would you describe the majority of the parishes which you have served during your ministry with regard to the following characteristics:

1. Socio-economic level

a. Upper	6	12	5	10	---
b. Middle	33	64	34	71	---
c. Lower	12	24	9	19	0.8<p>0.9

2. Sociological environment

a. Rural	8	18	9	19	---
b. Urban	41	82	38	81	0.7<p>0.5

3. Population

a. Small (500-1000 families)	12	23	9	19	---
b. Medium (1000-1500 families)	15	29	20	42	---
c. Large (1500-plus families)	25	48	19	40	0.5<p>0.3

4. Racial composition

a. 100% to 75% Caucasian	40	80	34	71	---
b. 75% to 50% Caucasian	7	14	10	21	---
c. 50% to 25% Caucasian	1	2	2	4	---
d. 25% to 0% Caucasian	2	4	2	4	0.5<p>0.3

Ten personal interviews were conducted by this investigator with clergymen who were identified as agreeing (5) or disagreeing (5) with the views of the Church pertaining to suicide. These interviews served to amplify the findings of this study and the results were reported in the previous chapter together with appropriate references from pertinent literature.

B. CONCLUSIONS

It would appear, as a result of all that has been disclosed by this study, that the following factors are related to the occurrence of a more sympathetic or liberal attitude on the part of the priest toward suicide:

1. A greater number of exposures to those who have expressed suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide or subsequently committed suicide;
2. Viewing suicide as a socio-psychological phenomenon rather than as a situation wherein an individual has control over his environmental pressures at all times;
3. A firm belief that suicidal individuals are victims of psychological and/or socio-economic stresses;
4. That although the threat of public scandal may limit the full burial rites of a suicide, it should never prevent the priest from granting, at least, a partial burial;
5. An appreciation for an individual's circumstances and for the manner in which he interprets the after-life;
6. An awareness that man's self-destructive tendencies are not deterred necessarily by strong church pronouncements;
7. A belief that the act of suicide may rid the community of an undesirable and parasitic element and which belief is founded upon the suicide's own statement;

8. The view that in denying an individual the opportunity to make his own decision (to take his own life) one is denying him a basic right, i.e., the right to think and act in the society of man;
9. A belief that God will forgive the suicide when He reviews the act within the context of the suicide's acquired neurosis or psychosis;
10. That extenuating social and psychological circumstances do play an important role in man's decision to act in contradiction to the basic laws of nature and love;
11. That suicide should be called a wrong act and not a sinful act in as much as man is not in control of the pressures generated by socio-psychological phenomena;
12. That man, in defense of faith, loved ones, country, and at times of terminal sickness, can be given the courage, by God, to bring about his own demise;
13. That referrals outside the Church are prudent when a person's emotional needs require professional psychotherapeutic help.

The following factors do not appear to be statistically significant in the development of a more liberal or more conservative attitude toward suicide, on the part of the priest:

1. His place of birth;
2. The number of years during which he attended college, the seminary or graduate school;
3. The geographic location of the schools which he attended;
4. The socio-economic background of his family;
5. The urban or rural location of his residence during the formative years of his life;
6. The years and type of service in the ministry;
7. His formal clinical training;
8. His chaplaincy experience;
9. The attitude that suicide is a forgivable sin because God judges the content of the last from the context of the whole;
10. The belief that suicide is not a sin because nowhere does the Bible specifically state this;
11. His self-appraisal of his counseling competence;
12. His contacts or awareness of the existence of the L.A.S.P.C.;

13. The sociological environment of rural and urban pastorates and the racial composition of the parish;
14. The size and socio-economic level of the parish which he has served.

The Canonical position of the Church, in accordance with Canon (C.I.C.) 1240, states that those who have committed suicide are denied the burial rites of the Church. However, if the deceased is found to have destroyed himself because of irrationality, the Church allows the full burial service for the suicide. Whenever doubt becomes an issue, the decision is to be made in favor of the suicide.

The interviews revealed that it has been the practice of the liberal clergy to place all suicides in the category of the irrational. This allows them the freedom to grant full burial rites and in cases of potential public scandal to perform, at least, partial burial services (see Item A, Number 2 - page 72). Although the conservatives have attempted to defend the position of the Church on burial prohibitions a substantial number manifested concern over this issue.

However, one cannot escape the conclusion that the position and practice of the Church, with regard to suicide, is inconsistent. This statement is supported by the statistical significance of that item in the questionnaire (Item A, Number 2) which assesses the burial practices of the parish priests as well as the

Item A, Number 3, part (a) which assesses the priests' knowledge of Canon law.

Regarding Item A, Number 2, one would have anticipated a response by the total population of priests in all four categories concerning burial practices and the suicide, i.e., refusal to bury the suicide, granting a partial burial service, granting full burial rites and giving confessional absolution to an attempted suicide. However, this was not the case for the computed Chi-square reflected a level of significance at $p < 0.001$, which differentiated the liberal from the conservative priests. The pattern of response would be expected to occur when one recognizes that the Church both grants and denies burial to the suicide, with extenuating psychological circumstances being the criterion for permission being granted for full burial services (see preceding Canon law reference).

In reference to Item A, Number 3, part (a), one could have expected the total population to disagree with the statement that the Church is to grant full burial rites to a rational individual who has committed suicide. The position of the Church explicitly states that no burial rites are to be performed for such an individual. The interviews revealed that there was much uncertainty and doubt regarding this matter, which fact could reflect directly upon the inconsistency of Church practice.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Priest.

It would appear, as a result of the findings of this study that one might be able to make the following recommendations for the creation of a more sympathetic or liberal attitude on the part of the priest toward suicide:

1. In the preparation for the priesthood the candidate should be afforded opportunities (Suicide Prevention Center Internship) to work with persons in crises who have expressed suicidal thoughts or who have attempted suicide and to conduct psychological autopsies on individuals who have committed suicide;
2. The seminary curriculum should reflect:
 - a) a greater interest in the socio-psychological pressures which confront contemporary man;
 - b) the attitude that the threat of public scandal should never prevent the priest from granting, at least, a partial burial for the suicide;
 - c) a sensitivity to an individual's circumstances which would provide for a more meaningful interpretation of the after-life and would increase the priest's understanding of the suicidal wishes of distressed persons;
 - d) an awareness that man's self-destructive tendencies often are not deterred by strong Church pronouncements;
 - e) the view that God will forgive the suicide when He views the act within the context of the suicide's acquired neurosis or psychosis;
 - f) the fact that extenuating social and psychological circumstances of man do play an important role in his decision to act in contradiction to the basic laws of nature and love;

- g) the attitude that suicide should be called a wrong act and not a sin because man ostensibly is not in control of the pressures generated by socio-psychological phenomena;
 - h) an awareness that suicide is a socio-psychological event occurring in an emotionally disturbed individual who is deprived of his "free will" and his ability to reason;
 - i) the belief that man in defense of faith, loved ones, country and, at times of terminal sickness, can be given the courage, by God, to bring about his own demise;
3. The priest's referrals outside the Church are a wise course of action when a parishioner's emotional needs require professional psychotherapeutic aid.

2. The Church.

As a result of the findings of this study, it would seem that one might be able to make the following recommendations for increasing the consistency of the Church's position and practice with regard to suicide:

- 1. Increase the communication between administration and the parish priest who is directly involved with the particular needs of his parishioners, e.g., pamphlets and brochures which clarify the Church position on suicide;
- 2. Involve the parish priest more directly with the formulation of Church policy on the Council level whereby policy changes can be more consistent with the contemporary needs of society;
- 3. Have the parish priest report to the prelates the reactions of the people to the promulgation of revised Canon law;
- 4. Have the parish priest advise the administration as to the changes which arise in the socio-psychological patterns of his parish, e.g., an increase in suicides, and which demand the attention of the Church.

B. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has revealed several interesting facets pertaining to suicide which are worthy of investigation and further research. Some of these facets are as follows:

1. A more specific identification of the position which exists on the continuum between the liberal and conservative priest with regard to suicide as discussed in this study;
2. A more accurate determination of those concepts which enter into the priest's thinking concerning suicide and which are responsible for his position on the liberal-conservative continuum, e.g., theology, Christian ethics, canon law, sociology and psychology;
3. A more refined description of the forces which enter into the development of the value system of a priest;
4. A comparison of the Old and New Testaments' interpretation of sin in reference to suicide with emphasis upon the newer, avante-garde thinking in theology, e.g., Hans Kung, et al;
5. An analysis of the influences of earlier civilizations upon the development of the Old Testament attitude toward suicide, e.g., Egyptian, Babylonians, Persians, et al;
6. An evaluation of the extent to which a strong Church pronouncement and burial prohibition would affect the believer's attitude toward suicide as a sin;
7. A more precise evaluation of the significance of those factors which are to be found in the priest's personal background and which have a direct influence upon his attitude about suicide, e.g., formal clinical training, type and duration of experience in the ministry, type and duration of educational background, place of birth, socio-economic background of parents, and the urban-rural environment during formative years of his life.

APPENDIX A

CLERGY QUESTIONNAIRE ON SUICIDE

CLERGY QUESTIONNAIRE ON SUICIDE

Instruction: Please complete the following questionnaire.
All responses will remain absolutely
confidential and anonymous.

PERSONAL DATA

1. Name _____
2. Church Address _____
3. Country of Birth _____ 4. Age _____
5. Religious Denomination:
 Roman Catholic _____ Eastern Orthodox _____
 Protestant _____ Other _____
6. Educational Background:
 a. College or University _____ (yrs.)
 b. Seminary _____ (yrs.)
 c. Graduate Study _____ (yrs.)
7. The major portion of my education was received in the following area of the United States:
 a. Northeast _____ b. South _____ c. Midwest _____
 d. West _____ e. If abroad which country? _____
8. Socio-economic level of my family background:
 a. Upper _____ b. Middle _____ c. Lower _____
9. The place of residence during my formative years (1-16 years of age).
 a. Essentially urban _____ b. Essentially rural _____
10. The years of service in my ministry are as follows:
 a. Ministry (total yrs.) _____ b. Parish (yrs.) _____
 c. Educational (yrs.) _____ d. Administrative (yrs.) _____
11. My experience and practice:
 a. Pastoral Clinical Training (yrs.) _____
 b. Chaplaincy Experience (yrs.) _____
 1. General Hospital (yrs.) _____
 2. Penal Institution (yrs.) _____
 3. Mental Institution (yrs.) _____

ATTITUDE TOWARD SUICIDE**A. My Practice and Beliefs**

1. How many individuals have you counseled who have
 - a. Expressed suicidal thoughts _____?
 - b. Attempted suicide _____?
 - c. Later committed suicide _____?
2. In your parish ministry concerning suicides how many times have you
 - a. Refused to bury the suicide (no ritual) _____?
 - b. Granted a partial burial service (grave side or private) _____?
 - c. Granted full burial rites (public church service) _____?
 - d. Given confessional absolution to an attempted suicide _____?
3. I would give the full burial rites of my Church to a
 - a. rational individual who has committed suicide.
agree _____ uncertain _____ disagree _____
 - b. mentally unbalanced individual who has committed suicide.
agree _____ uncertain _____ disagree _____
 - c. someone who has expressed repentance after an attempted suicide.
agree _____ uncertain _____ disagree _____
 - d. someone who has committed suicide where there is some doubt as to the rationality of the individual.
agree _____ uncertain _____ disagree _____
4. I believe that religion encourages suicide because historically it speaks glowingly of an afterlife and has often been pessimistic about this world.
agree _____ uncertain _____ disagree _____
5. I believe that a strong ecclesiastical pronouncement against suicide deters parishioners from taking their lives.
agree _____ uncertain _____ disagree _____

B. My Theological Position About Suicide

1. Suicide is a sin because by killing oneself, one injures the community of man of which one is part.
agree _____ uncertain _____ disagree _____

2. Suicide is a sin because it assumes the prerogative of God who alone has the right to give life and take it away.
agree_____uncertain_____disagree_____
3. Suicide is a sin because every man should love himself and therefore suicide is contrary to natural law and to love.
agree_____uncertain_____disagree_____
4. Suicide is a forgivable sin because God judges the content of the last hour in the context of the whole. Even a righteous man may be in the wrong momentarily by the act of suicide at the last.
agree_____uncertain_____disagree_____
5. Suicide is not a sin because those forces which are responsible for it are of a socio-psychological nature which are not always capable of being controlled by the individual, thereby absolving him of guilt.
agree_____uncertain_____disagree_____
6. There are situations in which God may actually grant man the courage to destroy himself, so that he cannot be regarded as a suicide in the bad sense.
agree_____uncertain_____disagree_____
7. Suicide is not a sin because the Bible nowhere explicitly states this.
agree_____uncertain_____disagree_____

Important: If you feel the above statements do not adequately convey your personal views on suicide, please feel free to describe them on the back of this sheet.

C. My Referral Practices

1. In suicidal cases a. I feel certain I can be of help to the suicidal individual with or without outside referral _____, b. I feel somewhat certain _____, c. I do not feel certain at all _____, d. I feel the need to cooperate with professional help _____. (Please write on back of this sheet any further comments on this matter.)

2. If your experience has included contact with suicidal persons, how many times did you refer suicidal persons to an agency or professional person
 - a. outside the Church? _____
 - b. within the Church? _____
3. Were you aware of the existence of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center before receiving this questionnaire? Yes _____ No _____

PARISH CHARACTERISTICS

How would you describe the majority of the parishes which you have served during your ministry with regard to the following characteristics:

1. Socio-economic level?
 - a. Upper _____
 - b. Middle _____
 - c. Lower _____
2. Sociological environment?
 - a. Rural _____
 - b. Urban _____
3. Population?
 - a. Small (500 - 1000 families) _____
 - b. Medium (1000 - 1500 families) _____
 - c. Large (1500 - plus families) _____
4. Racial composition?
 - a. 100% to 75% Caucasian _____
 - b. 75% to 50% Caucasian _____
 - c. 50% to 25% Caucasian _____
 - d. 25% to 0% Caucasian _____

Thank you for your cooperation. Please return this questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. For further information please contact:

The Rev. A. H. Demopulos
Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center
2521 West Pico Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90006

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER

2521 WEST PICO BOULEVARD
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90006

TELEPHONE: DUNKIRK 1-5111

March 1, 1967

PROJECT CO-DIRECTOR:
NORMAN L. FARBEROW, PH.D.

PROJECT CO-DIRECTOR AND
CHIEF PSYCHIATRIST:
ROBERT E. LITMAN, M.D.

ASSOCIATE CHIEF PSYCHIATRIST:
NORMAN TABACHNICK, M.D.

PSYCHIATRISTS:
ALBERT SCHRUT, M.D.
SAUL H. BORASH, M.D.

CHIEF PSYCHOLOGIST:
CARL I. WOLD, PH.D.

PSYCHOLOGIST:
MICHAEL L. PECK, PH.D.

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DAVID J. KLUGMAN, M.S.W.

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PAUL W. PRETZEL, TH.D.

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ASSOCIATE IN PSYCHOLOGY:
ALCON G. DEVRIES, PH.D.

VISITING CLINICAL FELLOW
(1966-1967):
KENSUO OHARA, M.D.

ASSOCIATE IN THEOLOGY:
REV. A. DEMOPULOS, S.T.M.

Dear Father,

With the support of the School of Theology at Claremont, California, and the assistance of the members of the staff of the Suicide Prevention Center of Los Angeles, including the use of their facilities, I have undertaken a research project to ascertain the position and practices of the Church with regard to suicides. This study seeks to understand objectively the manner in which the representatives of the Church are coping with individuals who have suicidal tendencies.

Enclosed is a questionnaire. I would be grateful if you would take the time to answer it and assist us in completing this important study.

The permission and sanction of the Chancery Office has been granted and I have been given the authority to contact parish priests with regard to the objectives of this study.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation in this matter, I remain

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Fr. A. Demopulos

APPENDIX C

**SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER ASSESSMENT
OF SUICIDAL POTENTIALITY**

Name _____ Age _____ Sex _____ Date _____
Rater _____ Evaluation _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (9)
L M H

**SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER
ASSESSMENT OF SUICIDAL POTENTIALITY**

This schedule rates suicide potentiality. By "suicidal potentiality" is meant generally the possibility that the person might destroy himself. In general, the rating is for the present or the immediate future.

Listed below are categories with descriptive items which have been found to be useful in evaluating suicidal potentiality. The list is not meant to be inclusive, but rather suggestive. Some items imply high suicidal potentiality, while others imply low suicidal potentiality. Some items may be either high or low, depending on other factors in the individual case.

The numbers in parenthesis after each item suggest the most common range of values or weights to be assigned that item. Nine is highest, or most seriously suicidal, while one is lowest, or least seriously suicidal. The rating assigned will depend on the individual case. The rater will note that some categories range only from one to seven.

For each category the rater should select the item(s) which apply and place the weight he would assign it in the parentheses at the right of the item. (More than one item may apply.) The rater should then indicate his evaluation of his subject in that category by placing a number from one to nine (or one to seven) in the column headed, Rating for Category. In those categories where the descriptive item is not present for the subject being rated, write the item in and assign a weight in the parentheses following.

The overall suicidal potentiality rating may be found by entering the weights assigned for each category in the box, front page, totaling, and dividing by the number of categories rated. This number, rounded to the nearest whole number, should also be circled at the top of the front page.

SUICIDE POTENTIAL:

A&S _____
Sy _____
St _____
AvC _____
SlP _____
Res _____
PSB _____
MedSta _____
Comm _____
RoSO _____

TOTAL _____

No. of categories rated _____

Average _____

11/63

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. AGE AND SEX (1-9) | Rating for Category
() |
| Male | |
| 50 plus (7-9) | () |
| 35-49 (4-6) | () |
| 15-34 (1-3) | () |
| Female | |
| 50 plus (5-7) | () |
| 35-49 (3-5) | () |
| 15-34 (1-3) | () |
| 2. SYMPTOMS (1-9) | Rating for Category
() |
| Severe depression: sleep disorder, anorexia, weight loss, withdrawal, despondent, loss of interest, apathy. (7-9) | |
| | () |
| Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, exhaustion. (7-9) | |
| | () |
| Delusions, hallucination, loss of contact, disorientation. (6-8) | |
| | () |
| Compulsive gambler. (6-8) | |
| | () |
| Disorganization, confusion, chaos. (5-7) | |
| | () |
| Alcoholism, drug addiction, homosexuality. (4-7) | |
| | () |
| Agitation, tension, anxiety. (4-6) | |
| | () |
| Guilt, shame, embarrassment. (4-6) | |
| | () |
| Feelings of rage, anger, hostility, revenge. (4-6) | |
| | () |
| Poor impulse control, poor judgment. (4-6) | |
| | () |
| Frustrated dependency. (4-6) | |
| | () |
| Other (describe): | |
| | () |

3. **STRESS (1-9)** Rating for Category
()
- Loss of loved person by death, divorce, or separation. (5-9) ()
- Loss of job, money, prestige, status. (4-8) ()
- Sickness, serious illness, surgery, accident, loss of limb. (3-7) ()
- Threat of prosecution, criminal involvement, exposure. (4-6) ()
- Change(s) in life, environment, setting. (4-6) ()
- Success, promotion, increased responsibilities. (2-5) ()
- No significant stress. (1-3) ()
- Other (describe): ()
-
4. **ACUTE VERSUS CHRONIC (1-9)** Rating for Category
()
- Sharp, noticeable, and sudden onset of specific symptoms. (1-9) ()
- Recurrent outbreak of similar symptoms. (4-9) ()
- Recent increase in long-standing traits. (4-7) ()
- No specific recent change. (1-4) ()
- Other (describe): ()
-
5. **SUICIDAL PLAN (1-9)** Rating for Category
()
- Lethality of proposed method--gun, jump, hanging, drowning, knife, poison, pills, aspirin. (1-9) ()
- Availability of means in proposed method. (1-9) ()
- Specific detail and clarity in organization of plan. (1-9) ()
- Specificity in time planned. (1-9) ()
- Bizarre plans. (4-6) ()

Rating of previous suicide
 attempt(s). (1-9) ()
 No plans. (1-3) ()
 Other (describe): ()

6. RESOURCES (1-9) Rating for Category
 ()

No sources of support
 (family, friends, agencies,
 employment). (7-9) ()
 Family and friends available,
 unwilling to help. (4-7) ()
 Financial problem. (4-7) ()
 Available professional help,
 agency or therapist. (2-4) ()
 Family and/or friends
 willing to help. (1-3) ()
 Stable life history. (1-3) ()
 Physician or clergy
 available. (1-3) ()
 Employed. (1-3) ()
 Finances no problem. (1-3) ()
 Other (describe): ()

7. PRIOR SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR (1-7) Rating for Category
 ()

One or more prior attempts
 of high lethality. (6-7) ()
 One or more prior attempts
 of low lethality. (4-5) ()
 History of repeated threats
 and depression. (3-5) ()
 No prior suicidal or
 depressed history. (1-3) ()
 Other (describe): ()

8. MEDICAL STATUS (1-7) Rating for Category
 ()

Chronic debilitating illness.
 (5-7) ()
 Pattern of failure in
 previous therapy. (4-6) ()
 Many repeated unsuccessful
 experiences with doctors.
 (4-6) ()
 Psychosomatic illness, e.g.
 Asthma, ulcer, etc. (2-4) ()

Chronic minor illness
complaints, hypochondria.
(1-3) ()
No medical problems. (1-2) ()
Other (describe): ()

9. COMMUNICATION ASPECTS (1-7) Rating for Category
()

Communication broken with
rejection of efforts to
re-establish by both
patient and others. (5-7) ()
Communications have inter-
nalized goal, e.g.,
declaration of guilt, feel-
ings of worthlessness,
blame, shame. (4-7) ()
Communications have inter-
personalized goal, e.g.,
to cause guilt in others,
to force behavior, etc.
(2-4) ()
Communications directed
toward world and people
in general. (3-5) ()
Communications directed
toward one or more
specific persons. (1-3) ()
Other (describe): ()

10. REACTION OF SIGNIFICANT OTHER (1-7)

Rating for Category
()

Defensive, paranoid, rejected,
punishing attitude. (5-7)()
Denial of own or patient's
need for help. (5-7) ()
No feelings of concern about
the patient; does not under-
stand the patient. (4-6) ()
Indecisiveness, feelings of
helplessness. (3-5) ()
Alternation between feelings
of anger and rejection and
feelings of responsibility
and desire to help. (2-4)()
Sympathy and concern plus
admission of need for help.
(1-3) ()
Other (describe): ()

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